

Every year, we have to reinforce ways that we have learned to deal with the difficulties that life brings and to adapt to new challenges. In my fourth year teaching abroad, this has been no less true than the first year.

Part of this is because, at least for foreigners, a lot of changes happened at school this year: we quadrupled the size of our foreign staff, foreigners teach their specialties, and we also have a new foreign residence staff members. To help us hone our craft, we have a teaching coach from the United States that we communicate with over the Internet. The academic building has been redecorated and furnished with new electronic blackboards. And, most importantly for some students, our junior NBA program kicked off this year.

There have been some hiccups along the way. For example, we have had to deal with a confusing array paperwork. Also, communication across the language barrier amongst the staff hasn't been as smooth as it could be: sometimes it wasn't clear who we should talk to about an issue. And finally, we have had some disagreements about teaching techniques and also about the most effective ways to handle scheduling, class divisions, and bad behavior.

I can't speak for every school, but I suspect that these are things that a lot, if not most, schools deal with on a regular basis. And this is a year when a lot of changes have happened, so I think it is natural to have an adjustment period. But I also want to touch on something great that has happened this semester, because there are a lot of people that are working very hard every day to make our school the best it can be.

The main thing that I want to mention is that, Grade 10 Class 1, on the whole, has made amazing progress in just half a year. I have been teaching them my college major: Philosophy. It isn't an easy subject in one's native language but our students have been patient, shown respect, and studied hard. Now, through studying a 2400 year old philosophy text from Ancient Greece (translated into English), our students are showing the sparks of critical thought that underpin a life of learning. This progress was enabled only by massive leaps in English ability made by each and every student in that class. I am proud of them and I want to thank and congratulate each student for contributing so positively to our school.

I think that in the coming semester, with focus on student discipline and coordination between the different programs and departments on our staff, the kind of progress made in G10-C1 can become more widespread. So, it is with an optimistic feeling about our school that I prepare to end this semester and head home to visit my family in the USA. Thanks to all that have contributed to this school and I wish you a peaceful, rejuvenating, and fun Spring Festival.