

## When Distinct Cultures Collide: the decade EFZ went along with Peddie

10 years ago back in 2007, when Mr. Gao paid his visit to East China Normal University, the Peddie-EFZ program took its shape through a very brief talk. Originating just from that simple exchange, no one could have ever imagined the noteworthy success we have achieved over the past decade. Now, 10 years later, right here right now, as a student delegate of EFZ, I am honoured to be celebrating the 10-year anniversary of this remarkable exchange program. From my point of view, this program is not only about a simple exchange of students and teachers, but it also demonstrates a unique integration of two distinct cultures and education styles.

As an expatriate in Shanghai myself, I chose to enrol in EFZ not for its fame nationwide but for the diversity it embraces. You see most of the grand old schools in China are steeped in tradition, but EFZ (founded in 1958) and the teachers there consider and highly regard the multiple dimensions of students and how they learn. EFZ students are encouraged to branch out in to many fields of study, and not simply divide students into different classes as they do in more traditional schools. Take my class for example: I have enrolled in the experimental science class which gathers the top group of students focusing on STEM fields, but one of my classmates may show his interest in traditional Chinese Literature and will be encouraged to pursue that field of study. Most importantly, EFZ students are recognised not only for their academic achievements but also their specialties beyond study, including sports, arts, and many other various aspects.

Though it is true that EFZ is a school that embraces a progressive style of education (at least that is how it is viewed in China), there is still divergence that lies between Peddie and EFZ. Though the collision of eastern and western education style is nothing new to some of us, it is something that most of my schoolmates here have never experienced before. Our visit and this exchange program provides EFZ students with a precious opportunity to learn and compare between different education systems.

### 1. Creativity vs. Effort

Western educational systems put stress on the ideas of creativity. In Peddie, every student has a different schedule where they got a chance to pick what they want to learn every semester. Of course, it is still a system and means that many things are unified, but still, Peddie and western schools seems to do its best to promote individual approaches to different students.

Eastern education is much more about effort and diligence – meaning “nothing is hard if you practice enough.” Therefore, EFZ students are usually given lots of homework and are required to take additional classes during weekends. The peer pressure at EFZ pushes you to take a step ahead of what teachers are teaching at school.

### 2. Participation vs. Reception

Western education moves further and further along the road of turning students into full-fledged partners in their own educational process. For example - in Peddie classrooms, students are encouraged to ask questions and dispute with what their teachers may say. In the Eastern educational system it is the opposite. EFZ students are primarily the recipients – we listen to the lecture of teachers and the teaching process itself is far less interactive.

We should remember that the eastern and western approaches are not opposing views; but rather simply different pathways to one and the same thing that we are all looking forward to achieve.