

Relationships, Relationships, Relationships...

Satinder Banwait (Ulleung Middle School)

It took me a while to decide which topic I should write about. After considering the different topics, I finally opted for this one when I realized that I have encountered a vast number of challenges, all of which I have gotten through positively because of one thing. My relationships with people.

Anyone who teaches in Korea is well aware of the challenges that are experienced by the KET, GET and in some cases the schools too. I will not go into those here as they are not difficult to find through a quick search online.

I have a few simple strategies that so far have not failed me. The first is just to be myself. I bring all my hobbies to school and share what I did with everyone. In the same way I would do, if I were working back home. Our colleagues are naturally curious, and showing a picture or two about what you did over a weekend builds a closer working relationship. Of course I do not Cool Messenger the whole school or anything like that.

The second is to be positive and accepting. Things will not always go the way you planned, imagined or expected, but by staying open minded to alternative options you are guaranteed to have a good time. Sacrificing a bit of your free time goes a long way in Korea to building relationships. Considering how many hours some of our Korean colleagues work, taking the time out to have dinner with them or an afternoon hiking can make the world of difference. I count myself extremely lucky having a contract that explicitly states my entitlements, but it's also a cause for disconcert, so I refrain from referring to it unless absolutely necessary. In my experience, going with the flow brings you far more than the contract offers.

Taking an interest in the students is the final secret. I try to go on school trips and help with organizing non English events. This gives the students a chance to speak to you outside of regular classes, extra curricular or camps. The best part is that this interaction does not go unnoticed by the other teachers who are usually very impressed that their students can talk with the GET. It does earn you brownie points and praise, and it is often remembered.

This is a great place to work. If you put 100% in, you will get 150% back.



Hiking with some teachers