

02 CLASSROOM SUPPORT



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- I . School Hierarchy
- II . Korean School Culture
- III . Co-teaching Styles
- IV . Professional and Personal
Co-Teacher Relationships
- V . Cross Cultural Communication and
Conflict Resolution

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02. Classroom Support



Collectively, EPIK teachers come from seven different countries and bring thousands of different cultural and teaching experiences to the Korean classroom. The diversity amongst GETs is impressive: some teachers are fresh from university while others are seasoned professionals taking a break from their home country's classrooms. Some are entering into their fifth year in Korea while others are leaving their home country for the first time. Regardless of experience, working as an EPIK teacher necessitates perseverance, patience and a large reserve of positive thinking. Conflicts within the classroom do happen, and this section is dedicated to assisting GETs and their Korean Co-Teachers proactively and tactfully solve common teaching problems. Working together can be difficult and culturally trying, but if a co-teaching team can successfully come together, their lives and their students' lives will be that much more enriched.



I . School Hierarchy

The Korean Public School Hierarchy is complicated and roughly based on Confucian ideals. Gender, age and education all contribute and can make it difficult to know who can help if there is a problem.

A. School Hierarchy

Most schools in Korea are divided accordingly into two sections: the teaching staff and administrative staff. The teachers are further divided into academic departments. Every department has a head teacher (or chair of the department), and there is one Supervising Head Teacher in charge of all head teachers. Underneath the teachers are the contract teachers including EPIK teachers, the librarian, and part-time teachers. Substitute teachers are also lower in the school hierarchy.

Administration is led by the Head Administrator. All administrative public affairs staff work for the Head Administrator, and they work with the financial and logistical details of running a school.

Above the Supervising Head Teacher and Head Administrator is the Vice-Principal. The Vice-Principal manages many of the academic and administrative details of the school, and the Principal, of course, is above the Vice-Principal.

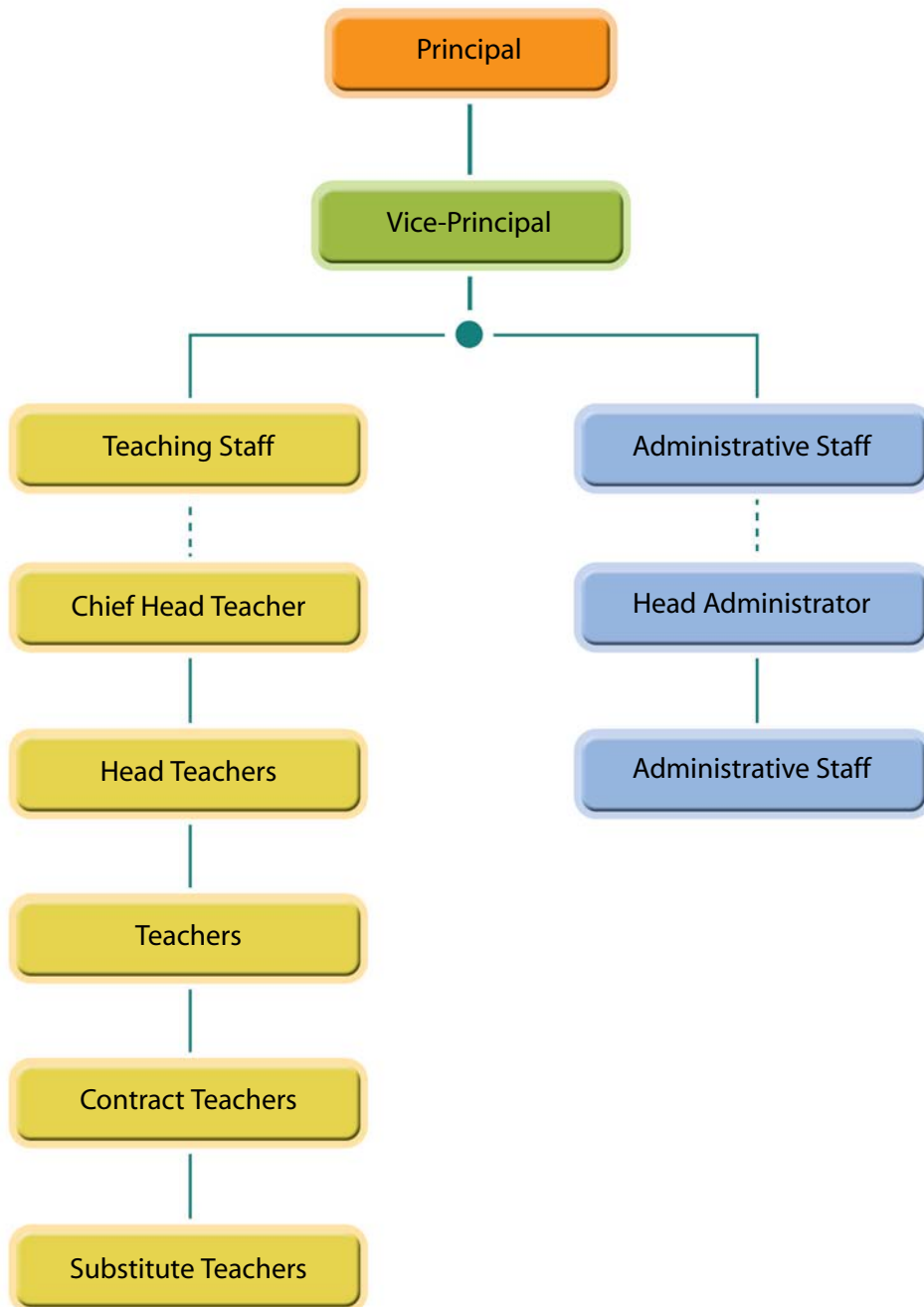
B. Support Chain

While working as a Co-Teaching team, problems will arise. If a problem cannot be solved between a GET and his Co-Teacher, there are several support resources available to the team. Ideally, the teaching team or GET will approach another English teacher or the head of the English department. The Supervising Head Teacher or Vice-Principal can be consulted next, and if the situation warrants more attention, the Principal can be consulted. For linguistic reasons, escalating a conflict to the attention of the Vice-Principal or Principal can be difficult and tedious. Finally, the GET should contact the Provincial Office of Education (POE) or Metropolitan Office of Education (MOE) coordinator for advice. It should be noted that the national EPIK office in Seoul does not have authority over the contract disputes and can only provide support and guidance. If a GET contacts the Vice-Principal, the Office of Education, or the national EPIK office before discussing the problem with a Co-Teacher, it can create an embarrassing and frustrating situation for the Co-Teacher.

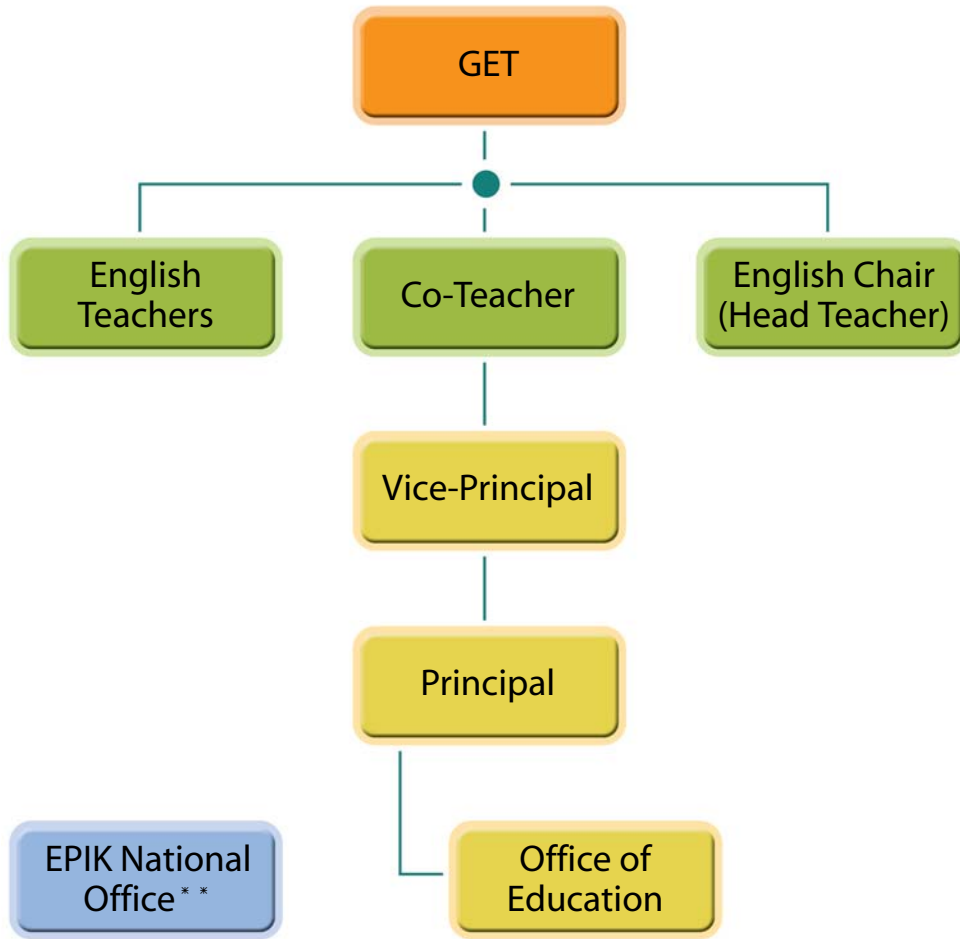
Case Study

Isaac's Co-teacher, Mi-hye, asked him to teach extra classes for 15,000 won per hour. He knew the standard overtime pay was 20,000 won per hour and asked Mi-hye about the problem. She was not familiar with his contract and couldn't give him a concrete answer. She told him that his pay should be the same as a Korean teachers' because he was teaching in a public school. Isaac directly called the EPIK office the next day to make a formal complaint. EPIK called his Metropolitan Office of Education, and the MOE contacted the school. Mi-hye was caught by surprise when the Vice-Principal came to her the next day and scolded her. The mistake was corrected, but Mi-hye was embarrassed in front of her peers. Isaac received his overtime pay, but the conflict caused some awkwardness between him and Mi-hye. They still have a tense relationship. Isaac learned that he could have approached this matter more tactfully.

The Korean Public School Hierarchy



Support Chain



**Please note that the EPIK National Office does not have authority over contracts.

II. Korean School Culture

Education in Korea focuses on developing a student's character and person. School is expected to refine a student's intellectual abilities and to prepare them to be responsible democratic citizens. The school system follows a 6-3-3-4 ladder pattern which consists of elementary school (6 years), middle school (3 years), high school (3 years) and junior college, college and university (4 years). The school year is divided into two semesters. The first semester begins approximately in March and ends in July; the second semester begins in late August and ends in December. The schedules are not standardized and vary from school to school.

The Korean educational system heavily emphasizes exams, and from a very young age, students are proficient exam takers. These days many teachers use new and innovative teaching methodologies, and students are familiar with many different teaching styles including lecture, task-based, and communicative based. Co-Teaching Teams are encouraged to focus on improving communicative abilities and should structure their classrooms to make a learning environment conducive to learning and speaking.

English teachers also face dramatic gaps in students' speaking and comprehension levels across all age groups. Some students study privately at academies or abroad for several years and are fairly fluent. Some, however, had never been exposed to English and can't read the alphabet. Co-Teaching teams have to face this problem in the classroom, and they will have to work together to bridge the language barrier between the strongest and weakest students.

Case Study

Terry was working at a middle school. Although he had a lot of EFL experience and had developed strong classroom management strategies, he felt as if he were battling some of his students for control of the classroom. In every class, there were five or six students who often spoke out of turn, did their math homework or slept. Terry tried to discipline them, but their behavior did not improve. Later Terry, consulted his Primary Co-Teacher, Sae-hun, and when they investigated the problem, they realized that the troublesome students had the worst grades in the class. Together, they remade the seating chart and sat the poor students with the best students. Now, the good students assist and explain activities to the other students. The disruptive students are quieter now, and Terry's classes have improved.

A. Elementary School Culture

In Korea, even elementary school students are busy, and their school schedule reflects this. Most students attend school until mid-afternoon-3 or 4 pm-and then attend different academies in the late afternoon and early evening. Most elementary school students go to private academies (학원, *hakwon*) for physical education such as Tae Kwon Do, music, and academic subjects. Generally, most elementary school students are home by early evening.

English education begins in the third grade when students focus on listening and speaking. In the fifth grade, students start to learn to read and write. Although English education officially begins during elementary school, many Korean students are exposed to English and native English teachers from an earlier age. Some students may have a surprisingly high level of English. Still, elementary students are young children and require age appropriate activities.

Especially, in immersion classrooms, elementary school students need constant stimulation; a co-teaching team should give special attention to lesson planning and classroom management. It is important to remember that Korea uses English as a foreign language (EFL) and that students don't have many opportunities to practice English outside of class. Task based activities work well in elementary schools.

Depending on the school, province or city, teachers are either homeroom teachers or subject specific teachers. Specifically, a GET may work with a homeroom teacher, who is qualified to teach many different subjects or with an English subject specific teacher (영어교담, *yeong-eo gyo-dam*). Most elementary schools have more homeroom teachers than English subject specific teachers. Often, GETs work with both homeroom teachers and *yeong-eo gyo dam* teachers throughout the year. Some homeroom teachers, however, may have lower English proficiency levels, and GETs should keep in mind that their Co-Teachers may not have an English specific academic background. Regardless, most elementary school teachers are committed to making an enriching and nurturing learning environment for their students.

Case Study

While working as a high school teacher in his home country of Australia, Garrett's calm and collected personality had been well received by his students, and he felt like he had been a successful teacher. When he moved to Korea and started working at an elementary school in a rural area, he was shocked by his students' energy and liveliness. He felt overwhelmed by how loud and active

they were everyday, and although he had to work with a textbook, he had difficulties getting his students' attention and keeping control over the classroom. He spoke with his Co-Teacher, Hee Jeong, about the problem, and she explained that the students were young and needed a lot of different activities to keep them motivated and interested in the material. English was their foreign language, Hee Jeong explained, and they probably had difficulties understanding his class so activities were better. Garrett looked into some resources and teaching methodologies in books and online, and with the help of Hee Jeong, he refined his classes. Specifically, he adopted a task based learning style and used tasks and activities to engage his students. He made sure to plan his lessons to include a variety of activities including singing, dancing and other interactive tasks. Garrett's students responded well to his class, and their interest in English has improved.

B. Middle School Culture

Since 1969 no limitations have been placed on entrance to middle school. All middle school students are assigned to a school nearest their residence if possible. There is no entry exam for middle school, and for this reason, some middle schools located in wealthier areas develop better reputations.

A Korean middle school's culture varies widely depending on several factors, and this directly affects co-teaching teams. At some schools, the majority of the students attend private academies. Academic *Hakwons* are generally expensive, give students more personal academic attention, tend to assign a lot of homework, and take a lot of time and energy. Colloquially, many GETs refer to middle school with a high rate of attendance at private academies as "*hakwon* middle schools." At schools in less privileged areas, students are less likely to attend academies. Those schools are known as "*hakwon* free middle schools." Students'

participation at a *hakwon* affects their classroom performance dramatically. At “*hakwon* middle schools,” many GETs have observed that the students have a higher level of English but tend to ignore or downplay the importance of public school work: the student may receive a more individualized education at their *hakwon*, and the student probably has more homework for the academy than for their public school. At “*hakwon* free middle schools,” students tend to be more eager to learn from their Korean teachers and co-teaching team. Their English levels may be lower. Of course, these are generalizations, and there are many exceptional schools that break this pattern.

Case Study

Henry worked at a Girls Middle School. The school was located in a wealthier area in town and the students always seemed tired and uninterested in his classes. He worked with his Co-Teachers to make interesting and educational lessons, but his students often did other work or slept during his class. He asked his Co-Teacher, Mi-kyeong, why the classes were always so bad, and she mentioned that most of the students attended private academies after school until midnight. At the academies, they were usually given extra homework too and their only free time was during their public school classes. Henry was concerned about his students’ wellbeing, but he also didn’t want to waste his time by teaching to uninterested students. Henry and Mi-kyeong decided to implement a new classroom reward system to motivate his students. They rewarded the best students with extra participation points, and at the end of each week, the best class received a sticker on the chalkboard. The class with the most stickers at the end of each month received a Homework Pass that they could use during the following month. The students instantly got excited, and classroom participation improved.

Case Study

Janet worked at a less privileged Boys Middle School. Her students were sincere and (admittedly) naughty. A few months after her arrival, she was chosen to be a judge at a POE sponsored speech contest. Although none of her students entered, she was still excited. When Janet went to the contest, she realized how low her students' English levels were in comparison with other schools. Dismayed, she returned to her school determined to help her students improve. The POE announced another speech contest, and she encouraged some of her more enthusiastic students to participate. When they signed up, Janet volunteered to coach them, and she met with them weekly to help them with the preparation, editing and delivery of their speeches. During the next contest, her students did very well and one placed in the top five.

C. High School Culture

By the time Korean students enter high school their academic and professional futures will be relatively defined. Students can choose between three types of high schools: general (academic) high schools, vocational high schools, and specialized high schools (such as foreign language, art and science high schools). In their third year, students from academic, specialized, and some vocational schools take the university entrance exam (수능 *su-neung*). The *su-neung* is the most important exam a Korean student will take, and preparation is intense. Students stay at school from 8 am until 10 or 11 pm Monday through Saturday during the entirety of high school to prepare for the exam. Entrance to university is largely based on the results of this exam, and its importance cannot be stressed enough. Third year students, in particular, are prone to nervous breakdowns, and

most academic school teachers are hyper-conscious of their students' mental and physical wellbeing. Because of the importance of the *su-neung*, many GETs may have a difficult job teaching traditional EFL materials that are not directly applicable to the exam.

The general academic high school is the most common high school. Students are divided in their second year according to their academic interests: literature, history and humanities students are placed in classes together, while sciences and maths students are grouped together.

Vocational schools offer general secondary education and specialized courses including those in the fields of agriculture, industry, commerce, and home economics. GETs should understand that English is a minor subject at vocational schools, and students may not show the same interest in learning the language. The students may not value learning English for the university entrance exam or communicative purposes, and this can be a big challenge for some co-teaching teams. These days, however, more and more vocational students take the *su-neung*, and their interest in English may be greater.

Case Study

Jake was an experienced ESL/EFL teacher working at a large all-boys high school in a large city. Jake and his Co-Teacher, You-seon, had control over the curriculum, and he prepared lessons for the first few months that had worked well during his previous EFL jobs. Initially, the students were interested in learning more about him, his family, and his life, and for the first few classes, the students were really enthusiastic. After three or four weeks, however, the

students' interest faded. During class, the students were unresponsive to his lessons and many slept. At a loss, Jake asked You-seon for some advice. She explained that most of the students stayed at school until 11 pm every day except for Sundays to prepare for the university entrance exam. They were exhausted and didn't care about Jake's class because it wouldn't help them perform well on the test. Jake decided to change the content and style of his classes to further help his students prepare for their exams. He borrowed a textbook and based his lessons on the content, vocabulary and grammar found in the text. Further, he found old copies of the university entrance exam online, and he also integrated these materials into his classes. When his students realized that his materials helped them review and study directly for their exams, they slowly grew more responsive to his classes again and (attempted to) stay awake and participate every day.

III. Co-Teaching Styles

Generally, there are three types of co-teaching styles associated with EFL/ESL education. Most Guest English Teachers assume one of the following roles: (1) the tape recorder; (2) the class leader; or (3) the partner.⁶⁾ All of these roles have positive and negative qualities associated with them, and while the partner (the shared classroom) is the preferred role, all styles can be successful and beneficial for students. Communication and agreement between GETs and Co-Teachers are important.

A. The Tape Recorder

Some Co-Teaching Teams (CTTs) are unsure of the GET's role in the classroom and occasionally, the GET is reduced to substitute for a DVD or CD player. Some-

6) Information Obtained from Scott McLaughlin's *How To Co-Teach*

times, confused GETs request to serve as the class' tape recorder. While *Repeat After Me* and listening exercises have merit in the classroom, most GETs and students find this routine boring and devoid of creativity. Korean Co-teachers lead the class while GETs serve in an auxiliary, supportive role. A variation of this style occurs when the Co-Teacher translates everything said by the GET. Often, Korean Co-Teachers maintain that the translation is necessary for communication, but GETs feel marginalized in the classroom.

Case Study

Eric had spent two years in Korea before joining EPIK. Although he had never had formal education in EFL or ESL, he felt confident that he could successfully teach his students at his small elementary school. Some of the homeroom teachers did not have a high level of English, and when his main Co-Teacher, Yoo-rah, realized this, she decided to accompany him to every class until he felt comfortable teaching. Soon, she had taken over his classes by translating everything he said and giving the students detailed explanations of the grammar behind his lesson. Eric spoke with Yoo-rah, but she stated that she was doing her best to ensure that the students understood. Eric didn't want to offend Yoo-rah by telling her to try new teaching methods, and he decided to suggest that he teach the last 10 minutes without any Korean. After Yoo-rah saw that he did well, he proposed another activity for the next week that would take 20 minutes. After a month of slowly increasing the length of his activities, Yoo-rah began to trust him and provided minimal instructions for his lessons. This new teaching style fits their personalities better, and their classes are more receptive to the materials.

B. The Leader

Many CTTs prefer to allow the GET to lead the lesson while the Co-Teacher provides short clarifications or classroom management assistance. As the leader, the GET is responsible for lesson planning and guiding the class. If immersion English is the goal, this is a great method to give the students an authentic English experience. This strategy requires more planning from the GET but usually alleviates a lot of stress on the Co-Teacher. If the GET is unprepared or disorganized, however, the lesson quality diminishes. Also, an English only class can be daunting for new GETs and difficult for younger students.

Case Study

Linda was a new GET and unfamiliar with teaching methods or EFL styles. When she arrived at a girls high school, she was intimidated by the students and teachers. When she arrived in the classroom, the students recognized her anxiety. The students didn't pay attention, and her class was a disaster. Linda's Co-Teacher sat in the back during the entire class and occasionally helped. Unfortunately, her Co-Teacher, Na-bi, had to prepare a major presentation for the school and was too busy to assist with much more than classroom management and minor translations. Every class was poorly received, and at the end of her first week, Linda felt like giving up. She pushed through and asked many friends for advice. She continued to have bad lessons for a while, but as time went on she felt more comfortable with her Co-Teacher and started having regular lunches with her. After a while, they began discussing lessons during lunch. Eventually, Na-bi began to give her very practical advice and with these suggestions, she began to control the classroom better. Linda also set up a weekly meeting with her friends at a local coffee

shop to share lesson plans and ideas. When Linda integrated her friends' suggestions with Na-bi's advice, her lessons grew stronger and she felt more confidence when leading her classroom.

C. The Partner (The Shared Classroom)

The shared classroom is the most preferred style of co-teaching, and it is equally rewarding for GETs and Korean Co-teachers. This style requires CTTs to communicate well and often about lesson plans, materials, and classroom procedures. When they work well together, the students enjoy a well-coordinated class, and the teachers can relax too. When the CTT fails to communicate needs or goals, the class may struggle to understand the lesson. In the shared classroom, both teachers assume an active role in teaching. Often, they split the class into segments, allowing each to lead for a brief period of time before passing the control back. For example, the GET may lead the warm-up activity while the Korean Co-Teacher manages the classroom. Then, the Co-Teacher may take the class and explain the vocabulary and activity for the day. While the students work on the activity, both teachers actively engage the class and give extra help. In this way, the CTT trades leading the lesson. Students and teachers report that this style is the most enjoyable and educational. It requires a large time commitment from both teachers. It's important to remember that sharing the class does not necessarily mean sharing the time. Even if a co-teaching team works well as partners, GETs still may lead more of the class while the Co-Teacher clarifies concepts and works individually with students.

Case Study

Andrew had already taught with EPIK for a year when he changed to a new middle school. He liked the school's culture but found working with his four different Co-Teachers difficult. All of the teachers had different styles, and he couldn't adjust to the differences. In particular, two teachers took control of his class and didn't allow him to teach. With the other two teachers, he had complete autonomy over his classroom. Andrew knew he enjoyed working in concert-as partners-with his Co-Teachers, so he arranged for a meeting. He told all of his Co-Teachers his preferences and asked for suggestions. Most of the teachers were very receptive to Andrew's ideas but were unsure how to actively change their styles. The Co-Teachers also warned Andrew that they didn't have much time and that it would be too difficult to discuss the lesson in depth before their classes. The teachers decided that Andrew would create one lesson plan for each week. He would highlight the Co-Teacher's role and write suggestions and requests for the lesson. He also included a small script for the Co-Teachers to use while leading the lesson. Andrew agreed to give the lesson plan to his Co-Teachers the week before the lessons and then the teachers could study their role in detail. While it took a while for the CTTs to develop a smooth classroom relationship, they eventually became solid teams. Andrew felt that he had control over his lessons, but he also knew that he had a strong support system in the classroom.

IV. Professional and Personal Co-Teacher Relationships

Maintaining a professional working relationship between Korean Co-Teachers and GETs is in the best interest for everyone, but occasionally communication and other work related problems occur. Conflict is natural, however, and working through problems can

lead to personal and professional growth. While living in Korea, co-teaching teams (CTTs) should approach any problem with tact and thoughtfulness; careless remarks or rude language can ruin a relationship. Without doubt, challenges will arise throughout the year, but with a little planning and a polite attitude, many conflicts can be avoided or resolved.

Common sources of conflict include:

- lack of communication between co-teacher and GET
- difference between co-teaching styles and expectations
- the mother (or bully) co-teacher
- the super busy or absent Korean co-teacher
- the unprepared GET

GETs and their Co-Teachers need to work together to help their students learn more effectively. A desirable co-teaching class will involve both teachers in from the planning stages to the evaluation. Most EPIK teachers and Co-teachers work harmoniously, but some teachers either do not know their roles or misunderstand them. The following will help teachers who want to improve their co-teaching skills.

A. Lack of communication between the Korean Co-Teacher and GET

Many GETs have reported feeling frustrated with seemingly last minute and unexpected notices they receive (or don't receive) from their Korean Co-Teachers. Cancelled classes and sudden warning of teachers' gatherings are all common complaints. While many Westerners are accustomed to rigid schedules and intensive planning, Korean culture tends toward last minute changes. Most GETs adjust to these sudden changes and learn

to be flexible. There are many strategies CTTs can use to work toward an appropriate and comfortable work solution. Most schools have a monthly and yearly plan already written, and experienced GETs recommend working with a Co-Teacher to translate the calendar and to mark the big events. This helps GETs feel more comfortable with the schedule and school.

Case Study

Lucy, a first year GET, faced an escalating communication problem. When she arrived at her school, she decided to be flexible and to make an effort to accept and comply with her Co-teacher's requests. By her fourth week, however, when many classes had been cancelled and added with little notice, she became annoyed. One day in October, she arrived at school wearing normal business casual clothes. When she was informed that it was Sports Day and she needed to change, her frustration changed to anger. Lucy waited a few days for her anger to subside and then approached her Co-Teacher, So-yeong, for help. She told So-yeong that she was trying her best to be flexible and adapt to Korean school culture, but the sudden changes made her feel uncomfortable and unstable. So-yeong explained that the teachers never knew when classes would be cancelled or added; the Korean teachers were told during a morning meeting about class changes. The two discussed the problem for a while and decided that So-yeong would text message any schedule updates via cell phone every morning. For major changes, So-yeong messages her the night before, and they now meet once a week during lunch. Now, when Lucy walks to school, she receives a message about her day. She has time to reflect and prepare for the changes. The two also worked together to translate the school calendar into English. While some days still surprise Lucy, this new system has allowed for both teachers to feel more comfortable with each other.

B. Difference between co-teaching styles and expectations

Different teaching styles, classroom management methods and interpersonal skills can cause conflict between a GET and Co-Teacher. If the situation isn't approached carefully, the teachers and the students suffer from poor classroom morale. Notably, punishment of students, Co-Teacher's absences and conflicting teaching styles can cause tension between a GET and Korean Co-Teacher.

1. Punishment of students

While it is not common, corporal punishment still exists in some schools in Korea, and this is a cause for concern and anxiety for many GETs. Co-Teaching teams should discuss this issue at the beginning of the year. In principle, many GETs feel the need to stop the punishment immediately, but this can be very detrimental to the future GET/Co-Teacher relationship. By interrupting the punishment, the GET undermines the Co-Teacher's authority, rejects Korean cultural values, and embarrasses the Co-Teacher. The Korean Co-Teacher may lose face. It may be difficult, but many current GETs recommend waiting until the end of class and then approaching the Co-Teacher privately.

Case Study

Mark was teaching at a girls high school in a small city. He had a comfortable working relationship with all of his co-teachers until one class when his students were especially noisy and rude. One student in particular kept speaking back to him. After several attempts to quiet her indirectly, he finally yelled at her. His Co-Teacher, Seong-kwan, realized there was a problem and immediate-

ly stepped in: he took a hard plastic ruler and began to hit the student on the palm of her hand repeatedly. Shocked, Mark told Seong-kwan to stop, but he didn't. After class, Mark confronted Seong-kwan and told him to never punish a student in his classroom again. Offended, Seong-kwan walked away from the argument, and Mark's anger grew. Later, all five of Mark's Co-Teachers approached him for an informal discussion. They questioned his classroom management skills and asked him to respect the Korean Co-Teachers' decisions in the future. Angry but overwhelmed, Mark agreed. Later, however, he asked his Primary Co-Teacher for a private meeting. Before the meeting, he wrote down the specific problem and read it to his Teacher. He explained that he understood he was in Korea, but he was uncomfortable with the punishment. He requested that his Co-Teachers either take a lesser role in the classroom and allow him to control the students or that the Co-Teachers use a less severe method of punishment such as writing lines or standing at the back of the room. The Co-Teachers agreed to use a different method of punishment for Mark's class. Mark decided to forget his anger about the five teacher confrontation; he didn't want to make his Co-Teachers more uncomfortable, and he let the matter drop. Mark also realized that Seong-kwan's authority had been challenged during the class and that he had offended him. They discussed the situation and now have a more comfortable working relationship.

Case Study

Christina was working at a middle school when she saw one of her Co-Teachers paddling a student. Christina was upset and told the teacher to stop. The teacher

didn't, and later that day, Christina called the Office of Education to make a formal complaint. The Office of Education was concerned and phoned the Principal. Caught unaware, the Principal was shocked and furious that Christina had filed a complaint without discussing the problem with anyone else. He pulled her out of her class and chided her. Upset, Christina walked away, and their relationship (as well as her relationship with her Co-Teachers) was damaged permanently. After the semester finished Christina was transferred to another school at the mutual request of her principal and her Co-Teacher. Her relationship deteriorated with her co-workers after the argument. She has not contacted them since her departure.

2. Absent, Late or Uninvolved Co-Teachers

An incredibly stressful situation for a GET is to walk into a classroom and realize that their Co-Teacher is late or missing. Many Co-Teachers are busy, and although unfortunate, this situation does happen. If a Co-Teacher misses class once or twice, it shouldn't cause too much worry: Co-Teachers, again, have many duties including teaching, finishing paperwork, arranging conferences with parents and working on other projects and work. In some cases, Co-Teachers must participate in unexpected conferences with parents or complete very urgent paperwork. If a Co-Teacher regularly misses class, however, the GET should approach the Co-Teacher privately and communicate how stressful and difficult it is to conduct class without a partner. Some GETs ask other teachers to help with translations and lead classes alone. Others redesign their lesson plan so that they can lead the class with little assistance.

Case Study

Robert worked at a High School in a rural area. Students were respectful, but their English levels were very low. He often needed help in class with minor translations from his Co-Teachers. One Co-Teacher, Seong-he, however, failed to come to class for several weeks in a row. Confused, Robert asked his Primary Co-Teacher, Tae-min, for advice. Tae-min spoke with Seong-he, and they discovered that Seong-he was ashamed by his low level English abilities and poor pronunciation. He didn't want to embarrass himself in front of the students. Robert made an effort to give the teacher personal directions specific to the lesson before classes. Seong-he familiarized himself with the material and lesson beforehand and felt more confident to join classes and give extra Korean instructions.

3. Conflicting Teaching Styles

Most GETs work with several Korean Co-Teachers throughout the year, and many GETs find that teachers have different styles. Experienced co-teaching teams recommend setting a weekly meeting with all teachers to discuss lesson plans and Co-Teacher involvement. Sometimes, however, Co-Teachers are still unsure of their role in the classroom and resort to taking control, leaving or translating every sentence. GETs who have experienced this usually e-mail their PPT or lesson materials before the class with annotations marking when the Co-Teacher's assistance is needed. It may take some effort and time for everyone to understand their role.

Case Study

Mary lived in a small town and worked at a very small elementary school. She had two co-teachers: with her primary co-teacher, Hye-Jeong, she worked well,

and they formed a good team. With her second Co-Teacher, however, she had some problems: he usually stood in the back of the room and translated everything she said for the students. The students learned to ignore Mary because they knew the Co-Teacher, Won-shik, would translate into Korean. Mary asked Won-shik to refrain from translating, but he didn't understand the problem and refused to change his style. Mary couldn't imagine spending the whole year dreading half of her classes so she scheduled a meeting with both Co-Teachers. Tactfully, Mary said that she wanted to ensure that both teachers felt comfortable in the classroom, and she gave both teachers notes and materials for the next week's classes. She asked both teachers to only help at certain points. Since Hye-Jeong had higher English skills, she translated her reasons to Won-shik. The next week, both Co-Teachers understood their role better, and the team performed more cohesively in the classroom.

C. The Mother (or Bully) Co-Teacher

Cultural differences and culture shock considered, moving to Korea and joining a public school can be a difficult and stressful process for many foreigners. A new city, home, job and language can make a Westerner feel uncomfortable and out of place. Regardless, most Western cultures highly value independence, and when placed in a new and strange environment, most GETs view the experience as a test of ingenuity and self-reliance. Many Koreans, however, do not value independence or self-reliance as highly. When there is a large age difference between the GET and Co-Teacher, the team may develop a maternal or older-sibling type relationship. While GETs may enjoy this familial relationship, others feel overburdened and overwhelmed by their Co-Teacher's interest and generosity.

Most successful co-teaching teams establish clear relationship boundaries early in the semester.

Case Study

Michael worked at a middle school. The staff and students were very welcoming, but he thought it was odd that his Co-Teacher, Jihae, took him to the hospital during his second week after a few coughs and that she always asked him about his weekend and weeknight plans. Still, he was gracious and appreciative when she invited him to her home for *Chuseok*, the Korean Thanksgiving, and when she gave him a tour of the city. After a month, however, Jihae had slowly taken over his life, and she called even on the weekends to see if he was free. Michael felt too bad to reject the teacher's offers, but he also wanted to make other Western friends. After spending three weekends with Jihae and other teachers at the school, Michael felt overwhelmed. The next weekend he told Jihae he was going on a trip. He took the weekend off, and when he returned to school, Jihae relaxed and gave him more space. The next week they went to the bank together, and Michael asked Jihae if she could give him a little more personal time outside of school. She accepted, and months later, Jihae told him that she was just trying to welcome him and spending so much time together had been a little stressful for her, too.

D. The Super Busy (or Absent) Co-Teacher

While the bully or mother Co-Teacher may be overwhelming, super busy or absent Co-Teachers can be just as underwhelming. New GETs may not know where to buy milk or to get a haircut. While a certain amount of autonomy is expected, Korea can be very confusing for foreigners unfamiliar with Hangul and Korea's style. Co-Teachers may be distant because of their workload. Co-Teachers usually have to perform their co-teaching duties in addition to their classes. They

are not paid extra for their help, and usually spend more time, energy and money in welcoming their new teacher than a GET may realize. Additionally, Korean teachers may not have had a choice in becoming a Co-Teacher. They may be the youngest or the newest. A small gesture of appreciation of goodwill is recommended.

Case Study

Michelle was not getting on well with her co-teacher. Her Co-Teacher, Hee-jin, refused to help her set up a cell phone, she didn't introduce Michelle to the teachers or students, and she didn't show Michelle where to buy food. Although this wasn't Hee-jin's job, Michelle was upset and wondered if she had made a poor first impression. From the first day Hee-jin told Michelle that she did not want to be her co-teacher. Often, Hee-jin didn't tell Michelle where or when to go for class, and she gave her little assistance in and out of school. Their relationship grew worse, and school became painful for Michelle. She wanted to ask her Principal for help, but he couldn't speak English well, and she was too scared to approach him. Michelle asked her Provincial Office of Education for assistance, and when the Office investigated, they discovered that Hee-jin had been forced into the position because she was the youngest teacher at the school. When the POE called, Hee-jin was upset and embarrassed that Michelle hadn't discussed the problem, and their relationship was damaged permanently. The POE and school decided that the best option was to replace Hee-jin. Michelle asked a close co-worker to be her new Co-Teacher.

E. The Unprepared GET

Teaching in a public school is a prestigious and well respected position in

Korea. While most Co-teachers have had years of specialized education, some GETs are new to teaching and not sure how to approach their classroom. Sometimes, GETs think that they should serve as a teacher's aide rather than classroom leader. Worse, some GETs don't understand the full weight of their position in their schools: they may think of teaching as a secondary activity to traveling and socializing. An unprepared GET places undue stress on his Co-Teacher, and ultimately, the students suffer from poorly planned and taught classes. In order to gain more ideas about how to lead classes, GETs often observe other Native English Teachers' classes during their first few weeks. It also helps to observe other classes with a Co-Teacher so that Co-Teaching teams can make lesson plans effectively.

Case Study

Calvin was a new GET. He had just graduated from university and wanted to travel and learn more about different cultures while making a living. Initially, Calvin was excited to teach, but after a month, his interest in his students waned. Each week he relied on his Co-Teacher, Mi-rae, to tell him a discussion topic for his class. His classes were usually chaotic. During class, Mi-rae often had to take over because he usually finished 10-20 minutes early. She quickly became frustrated and asked Calvin to take a more active role in the class. Mi-rae recommended several EFL books and even drove him to the bookstore to buy lesson planning materials. During exams week he studied the materials, visited some other schools to observe other teachers, and watched model lessons online. Before classes resumed, she told him that she needed to see his lesson plans and materials at least 2 days before the class. She explained that this was an integral part of his job, and if he couldn't do it, she would have to discuss the problem with the

Vice-Principal. With the books and resources, he had a more concrete understanding of EFL lessons, planning and classroom management. Calvin now makes his lesson plans and shows them to Mi-rae early. If they aren't acceptable, she gives him suggestions, and he edits them. The classes improved, and Calvin seems to take more pride in teaching.

V. Cross Cultural Communication and Conflict Resolution

Not all conflicts can be fully resolved. Compromise, patience and cultural sensitivity are necessary when working with a Co-Teacher. There are several different means of communicating during conflicts, and the following is just one of many possible ideas.

With conflicts, there is no right or wrong answer. There are different interpretations of a solution to the problem. This is especially important in Korea where Confucianism holds strong. Social relationships are loosely defined according to gender, age and social status. Depending on the context, it may be perceived as rude for a young, inexperienced GET to approach an older, well-educated Co-Teacher. Also, social rank and place are important to remember when discussing a conflict. It's better to first speak with a Co-Teacher first rather than talking to the Principal or Office of Education. If a GET attempts to resolve all of his conflicts through the Office of Education, it can be embarrassing for the Co-Teacher, Vice-Principal and Principal. In Korea, it's usually better to try to solve a problem beginning at the bottom even if this seems like an inconvenient route.

Case Study

Howard enjoyed working at his high school, but he was annoyed that he was expected to work 7:30 am - 5:30 pm. He was in a rural area, and arranging transportation that early and late was difficult. Unfortunately, he couldn't discuss the problem with his Co-Teacher because her English level was too low and no one at the school spoke English well. Howard tried to write down the problems and give it to his Co-Teacher to read later, but when he gave her a sheet of complaints, she got angry and stopped speaking with him. Stressed, Howard asked some other teachers what he should do, and a close friend offered to translate. His friend was a Korean-Canadian and could speak both languages well. The next day, Howard invited his Co-Teacher for dinner, and there they met his friend. As they discussed the situation, the Co-Teacher realized that the GET is contracted to work 8 hours a day, and they adjusted Howard's working hours.

A. Language, Culture and Interpretation

It's important for GETs and Co-Teachers to remember to be culturally sensitive. For Westerners, it is difficult (especially when angry) to control language and to remain tactful and polite. Direct language (such as: "You should do this"; "Do this."; "You must help me with this.") can be interpreted as a verbal attack by some Co-Teachers. Sometimes, many Westerners don't understand how strong their language appears to be. Their Co-Teacher may be angry for something meant as a suggestion. Alternatively, many Westerners may misinterpret a sincere request or suggestion as a demand because of a linguistic cultural mix-up.

The following is a representation of how most Koreans will interpret the English language and vice versa. The spectrum indicates tenses and words

that are perceived of as rude as well as respectful and well received styles of speech. The middle area indicates contextual specific verbs and tenses although they are generally acceptable.

This is a rough approximation of meaning. It is not always correct, but it aims to assist GETs and Co-Teachers who are having miscommunication problems.

If a Westerner says this, he means for it to be :

rude	depends on context	polite
Do this Don't do that Can you not do that?	You should... Why don't you...? You'd better	Would you...? Could you? Do you mind?

If a Korean says this, he means for it to be :

rude	depends on context	polite
You should... You shall... Do this. Don't do that. Can you not do that?	Why don't you?	Would you...? Could you...? You'd better...

Often, Westerners don't realize that their language is so strong, but softening the language will allow both to come to a solution faster. Ideally, the GET and Co-Teacher both want to arrive at a "Win-win" solution, but Western and Korean understandings of "win-win" may be different. Considering the importance of Confucianism, a GET may have to compromise more than they are accustomed. The best advice for any co-teaching team is to be calm, be patient and have respect. Also, since most co-teaching teams communicate in English, there may exist an unintended miscommunication. While English is a native language for GETs, it is a foreign language for their Korean Co-Teachers, and GETs, therefore, should understand that their Co-Teachers' English is not perfect. When trying to solve problems, there is always the possibility of a linguistic and cultural mix-up.

Case Study

After working at a middle school for a year, Erin was excited to change to an elementary school at the beginning of her second year. She felt that she was particularly fit for elementary school students and couldn't wait to teach them. Almost immediately, however, she had problems with her Co-Teacher, Yeon-ah. Yeon-ah's English levels were lower than her previous Co-Teacher's, and Erin felt that Yeon-ah often made demands that were unreasonable. Often, she began her sentences with, "You'd better...", and this made Erin uncomfortable. When they first met, Yeon-ah mentioned that Erin "better learn to cook," and Erin was put off immediately by the comment. Yeon-ah's speech seemed a little rude to Erin, and she didn't like that type of pressure. After the first week of classes, Yeon-ah told Erin, "You'd better change your teaching style." Offended, Erin walked away from Yeon-ah and ignored the comment. Later that day, Erin called her old Co-Teacher, with

whom she had a great relationship, and asked for advice. Her old Co-Teacher listened carefully and then realized that Yeon-ah actually was trying to be polite. She explained that Yeon-ah was only trying to make simple suggestions, and when she translated from Korean to English, she often used “You’d better...,” to make it nicer. “You’d better...,” is taught as an expression for giving advice with the same meaning as “You should...” when translated into Korean. Once Erin realized that Yeon-ah was trying to make gentle suggestions and not demands, she received Yeon-ah’s comments better and was able to integrate her comments and suggestions into her classes and life.

B. Basic Conflict Resolution Steps⁷⁾:

1. Describe the problem to yourself. Write it down.
2. Gather information. Listen to a close friend’s perspective.
3. Agree on the problem.
4. Brainstorm possible solutions.
5. Negotiate a solution.
6. Restate the solution. Create a plan of action.

7) Information Obtained from: <http://www.un.org/ombudsman/dos.html>