May 15, 2025, Munhwa Ilbo

“Teacher’s Empowerment stems from the trust of students.”

Empowerment doesn’t come from authority

“Trust” is the fundamental solution for resolving teachers’ rights issues

Leadership training after a doctorate in education

Teachers must keep learning to gain respect

An ideal school isn’t defined by its resources

Should offer “love, safety, and a sense of belonging”



"Being a teacher is a difficult profession. If someone says it’s easy, they are underestimating its fundamental impact."

On April 30, about two weeks prior to Teacher’s Day (May 15), Munhwa Ilbo sat down with Megan Shaffer, Upper School Principal at Chadwick International in Songdo International City, Incheon. With over 10 years of teaching experience in countries such as the U.S., Brazil, Thailand, and Japan, Shaffer was asked what it means to be a “good teacher.” She responded, “A teacher’s true power doesn’t come from authority but trust.” She began by stating, “As long as we don’t give up on teaching, students won’t easily give up on dreaming of a better future.” Shaffer emphasized that education is not just about delivering knowledge but is a noble journey that can transform lives. For that reason, teachers themselves must be committed to continuous reflection and self-improvement.

“Many young teachers ask how to become a good teacher. Each time, I say, ‘I’m still figuring

that out myself,' and invite them to search for answers together."

Just as children grow through the attention and care of those around them, teachers, too, need support and encouragement from their peers. This, she explained, is vital for sustaining a long career in education. She identified warm regard for students, deep empathy, and steadfast dedication as the highest virtues of an educator.

Already recognized for her expertise and leadership as an international school teacher, Shaffer took on the role of Upper School Principal at Chadwick International in August last year. Coming from a family of educators – both her parents being teachers – she was particularly influenced by her father, who taught English in high school. "What my father taught me was the attitude to never stop learning. That mindset that learning is a lifelong journey, is something I still live by today."

Even while teaching in the classroom, she never neglected her own learning. She earned a bachelor's degree in archaeology and biology, a doctorate in education, and a certificate in school management and leadership from Harvard University.

"Excellent students have persistence and passion for learning. Great teachers are no different. They don't give up even in the face of challenges, they keep searching for answers."



Shaffer noted that both students and teachers share a common goal of learning, and that's precisely why mutual trust and respect are so important.

What does an ideal school look like?

She stressed, "An ideal school isn't defined by its facilities or abundance of resources. It must be a place where students feel love, safety, support, and a sense of belonging."

According to Shaffer, a good school transcends the physical space of the classroom. It must foster a sense of community where students grow together, learning to respect and care for one another based on these four values that every child fundamentally needs. She also stated that schools should provide students with opportunities to help others, engage with their communities, and connect with nature through direct experiences.

Another goal she holds as an international school teacher is to help students grow into global citizens – able to understand and communicate across various cultures – while also feeling proud of and contributing to their community.

When asked about the recent rise of teachers' rights issues in South Korea, Shaffer pointed to "trust" as the fundamental solution. "A teacher's empowerment doesn't stem simply from his or her position or power. It is built on the trust they earn from students, parents, and fellow teachers."

She added, "The moment teachers feel most supported isn't when they are simply given decision-making power, but when they feel truly trusted." She once again emphasized the importance of building mutual trust and added, "When teachers acknowledge their own limitations and demonstrate a willingness to learn, that too is part of building trust."

As the interview concluded, Shaffer reiterated that the essence of education ultimately lies in love and respect. "All of us are doing our best with the information we have and given circumstances. In the end, what matters most is that our actions stem from the heart: 'I love you, and I want what is best for you.'"

Her message – that it's not just about students' rights or teachers' authority, but about building mutual trust and respect among all members of the educational community – offers a powerful reminder, especially on Teacher's Day, of the direction education must take.

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Chadwick International opened in September 2010 and offers a full PreK–G12 curriculum, from early childhood to high school. As the first overseas campus directly managed and operated by the prestigious Chadwick School in Los Angeles, it attracted significant attention from the Korean education community from the very beginning. The school currently enrolls over 1,450 students from 43 different countries, each with diverse backgrounds in environment and culture. Classes are conducted under a philosophy that emphasizes character development and holistic education, following a globally recognized academic curriculum – the International Baccalaureate (IB) program. Chadwick International was also the first international school in the Seoul metropolitan area to be certified by the Ministry of Education, allowing up to 40% of its enrollment to be Korean nationals with no prior overseas residency experience.

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