

December 6, 2010

Dear BCS Community,

Greetings from Chongqing, China. I am unable to access my blog due to internet restrictions here.

I visited three schools today and each visit was amazing! The teachers and administrators were so kind and every school made sure our visit was memorable. China is very proud of their progress in education over the past thirty years and after today I can see why. I have learned many things over the course of the past two days and look forward to visiting other schools tomorrow. Each visit begins with a welcome session and ends with exchanging gifts. The sessions with their staff provides us with a brief history of the school and an opportunity to ask questions. The questions however are asked in the presence of administrators and are carefully answered. It is the conversations I have had with the students and the teachers outside the supervision of the administration I find intriguing.

Creativity is, I believe, one of the non-negotiable characteristics of a quality education. Teachers and students must have the freedom, the knowhow, and the expectation to be creative. I firmly believe that when given the chance, all of us have a creative side that is essential in our learning. When the keynote speaker at our welcome banquet last night spoke of China's efforts to reform education and stated that creativity is pivotal, it caught my attention. According to her, the slogan for educational reform for the next decade is, "Escape Chinese Education." She strongly stated that in order for China to compete in the global arena, they must be more creative. Sound familiar?

My "covert" conversations revealed an environment very similar to ours here in the United States. Teachers feel they do not have time to be creative since they have loads of content to cover. They feel the pressure of assessments and take on the burden of preparing their students for very high stake tests given during the university application process. The students I talked to feel "powered down" at school, not having many technology tools to use within their classrooms. One student told me, "I do not like Chinese schools, we have 13 lessons a day and that is too much time to sit and listen." He then went on to ask me if I facebook and wanted my cell number. I responded by asking how he is able to access facebook since the government does not allow it. He just smiled like many 16 year olds I know and said, "I'm creative!"

As different as China and the United States are, today showed me that we have something in common. We have children that need our support, need our care, and most of all, need the opportunity to be creative. Escaping Chinese Education, from what I have learned, means to escape the same environment we have been trying to escape in education for years. No matter what country, state, or district we work or live in, we MUST advocate for creativity among our teachers and our students. China is pushing ahead to transition into a movement that the United States has already started. Both countries have a long way to go but as long as it continues to be a priority and we are motivated to make it happen, creativity cannot be denied for long!

G.E.E.K.ed in Chongqing,

Adam



Washington (a 16 year old- senior student) Washington is his English name