The Role of Education in US–South Korean Relations
A modified excerpt from the curriculum unit US–South Korean Relations

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This lesson examines the important role that education plays in the cultural and social relationship between the United States and South Korea. Students will also learn about education in Korea and complete independent projects on various education-related topics. Ultimately, students will consider how this aspect of the US–South Korean relationship has influenced the individual lives of Koreans and Americans. (Note: The full lesson introduces the important roles of sports, media, and the arts in US–Korean relations as well.)

MATERIALS
Handout 1, Education and US–South Korean Relations (on page 56)
Handout 2, Education in Korea (on page 57)

TEACHER PREPARATION
Make the appropriate number of copies of handouts. Each student will receive both handouts.

PROCEDURES

On day one
1. Begin the lesson by leading a brief introductory discussion using the questions below.
   - In what ways have Korean culture and American culture interacted throughout history?
   - In what ways do they interact today?
   - In what ways has education served as an important point of dialogue and interaction between the two societies?
   - How are education systems in South Korea and the United States similar and different?
2. Tell students that they will learn more about education in Korea. Distribute one copy of handouts one and two to each student. Once students have finished reading both handouts, ask them to choose which activity they would like to do. Students may work in small groups (three students or fewer) or do the activity alone, but must first receive teacher approval for their project. Note: Some activities (e.g., skits) work well in groups, while others (e.g., essays) work better as solo projects. If a group's proposed project is not appropriate for its size, either suggest that students choose another project, or alter the project assignment to be more appropriate for them.
3. For the remainder of class, allow students to work in their small groups. For homework, instruct students to research their topics and/or gather relevant materials for their project. Inform them that they will have the next class period to work on their projects.

On day two
Allow students to work on their chosen projects in their groups, sharing resources and materials with each other. If they do not complete the projects in class, ask them to complete the projects for homework.

On day three
Collect group projects for assessment. Some projects may need to be displayed around the classroom or presented orally.

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RESEURCES
CURRILCUM MATERIALS REVIEW—LESSON PLAN

Handout 1
Educazione e relazioni US-Suda Coreana

E' stato sempre dall'inizio delle relazioni tra Corea e Stati Uniti, l'educazione un importante punto di contatto tra le due società. In questi anni, molti uomini e donne hanno viaggiato tra Corea e Stati Uniti per scambi educativi, e questo trend ha persino aumentato nella recente storia. L'importanza dell'educazione in relazioni US-Suda Coreana è fondamentale non solo per il movimento di persone attraverso le frontiere, ma anche per lo scambio di idee e valori tra le due società. Questo scambio reciproco di conoscenza accademica e sociale diminuisce i gap culturali e promuove relazioni più strette.

Uno dei primi americani a visitare la Corea fu Mary Scranton, un'educatrice metodista. Nel 1886, fondò l'Philakdang, una scuola per ragazze coreane con un'iscrizione di un solo studente. Oggi, l'Ewha Philakdang è diventata l'Ewha Woman's University, la più prestigiosa e grande istituzione di apprendimento per donne in Corea (e una delle più grandi nel mondo), con un numero di studenti di circa 20,000.

Forse la famiglia americana più famosa in Corea è la famiglia Underwood, che ha vissuto in Corea per 119 anni (da 1885 a 2004) e ha svolto un ruolo importante nella società coreana in diversi modi, ma in modo particolare nell'educazione. Il presbiteriano Horace Underwood si è trasferito in Corea nel 1885 e ha fondato il Joseon Christian College nel 1915, che poi è diventato parte dell'Yonsei University, una delle due scuole superiori private più prestigiose della Corea e la più antica del paese. Durante i decenni, il suo figlio, nipote e bisnipote (tutti chiamati Horace) hanno svolto il ruolo di professori, principali/rectori, membri del consiglio, deputati e amministratori. La terza generazione Horace Underwood ha aiutato a fondare la Seoul National University nel 1946, la prima università nazionale (pubblica) della Corea, e la più prestigiosa. Il suo figlio ha servito come direttore della Fulbright Commission in Corea, la seconda più grande programma d'intercambio al mondo, aiutando a promuovere gli scambi educativi US-Suda Coreana.

Dall'Ottocento fino oggi, i legami educativi tra Stati Uniti e Corea hanno continuato a crescere. I Coreani ora rappresentano il più grande gruppo di studenti internazionali degli Stati Uniti, con più di 100,000 studenti attivi studiando in scuole dell'America, high schools e università alla fine del 2007. Inoltre, in Corea, i studenti studiano inglese in scuole, e parti del sistema educativo coreano, come le scuole di medicina e legge, stanno assumendo aspetti americani. Nel frattempo, le Università americane hanno visto una espansione del campo di studio di Studi Coreani, con programmi e centri di ricerca estabili alle università attraverso il mondo, tra cui Stanford, Columbia, Harvard, Berkeley, UCLA, Johns Hopkins, e altri. Questi fatti stanno come testimonianza di quanto i legami educativi tra le due società siano potenti.

**Choose one of the following activities:**

1. Nel 2007, l'Ewha Woman's University ha aperto il suo nuovo college, Scranton College, dedicato a Mary Scranton. L'ambasciatore degli Stati Uniti in Corea, Alexander Vershbow, ha parlato alla cerimonia d'apertura di Scranton College dicendo: "L'educazione è uno dei tanti valori importanti che legano gli americani e i coreani." Scrivi un articolo che descriva come l'educazione ha legato gli americani e i coreani. Inoltre, come ha influenzato l'educazione US-Suda Coreana in passato e attualmente?

2. Scegli un celebre graduato di Yonsei, Ewha, o University per lo sviluppo delle relazioni US-Suda Coreana. Designa un'esposizione che presenta questa persona e i suoi/le sue impegno. Dove pensi che dovrebbe essere collocato l'esposizione? Qual è il tuo motivo per selezionare questo luogo?

3. Scegli un artista, sviluppa un progetto per un oggetto scolastico (ad es., matita, zaino, pagina di annuario, copertina del libro, ecc.) che visualmente rappresenta come l'educazione ha influenzato le relazioni US-Suda Coreana.

4. Nel campo dell'educazione, ci sono molte opportunità per scambi sociali tra americani e coreani, tra cui scambi amici, programmi dei fratelli e delle sorelle, programmi di insegnamento all'estero e programmi di scambio studenti. Ricerca alcuni di questi programmi e scrivi un breve rapporto sui migliori programmi, riassumendo i tuoi risultati. Come un estensione, chiedi alla tua maestra se puoi cercare e coordinare alcune di queste opportunità per la classe.

5. Designa il tuo progetto originale.
Handout 2
Education in Korea

There is a Korean adage that, “One should not step even on the shadow of one’s teacher.” In Korea, educators—and education—are held in the highest regard. South Korean primary school teachers are recruited from the top five percent of college graduates. Students take their schooling very seriously, and it is common for high school students to return home after 9:00 PM on weekdays, after enduring a full day of school, after-school study groups, extracurricular activities, and extra sessions at a cram school or with a tutor. They attend school 220 days a year, compared to about 180–190 in the United States (depending on the state). South Koreans have one of the highest PhD per capita rates in the world. The reasons for Korean enthusiasm for education are varied, but many important factors lie in history.

Korean society, like others in East Asia, has many social legacies of Confucianism. Confucian philosophy places great emphasis on education, and as Koreans adopted Confucianism thousands of years ago, they also adopted its high regard for scholastic achievement. Korea has had well-structured school systems since ancient times, at least as far back as the Three Kingdoms period (57 BCE–668 CE), when national academies taught aristocratic youth Confucian classics and prepared them for government positions. In addition to state-run national schools, regional schools and private academies, as well as academic libraries and even scholarship funds, flourished in Korea during the Koryŏ and Chosŏn Dynasties (918–1392 and 1392–1910).

In the tenth century, Korea established a civil service examination system that was meant to select the most qualified students for government posts. For about a thousand years, these civil service examinations represented one of the few ways select individuals could improve their social status. Koreans' long experience with this examination system reinforced the cultural connection between success and scholarship. This legacy is still evident in South Korean society, where universities, governmental agencies, and many big companies administer their own entrance examinations.

Education for the masses first appeared in Korea in the 1880s, with the establishment of several modern institutions such as the English School, Yuyeong Gongwon, and Ewha Hakdang. The true educational renaissance, however, did not take place until the end of World War II. Today, South Korea has a literacy rate of about ninety-nine percent, and its national reading, math, and science scores consistently rank among the top five in the world. Beyond that, enrollment in tertiary (post high-school) educational institutions has also risen dramatically, from sixteen percent in 1980 to sixty-eight percent by 1997. Furthermore, contemporary South Korean views have become increasingly globalized, with students at all levels studying English and other foreign languages, either to study abroad or prepare for the most competitive jobs on the market.

Choose one of the following activities:

1. Until the fifteenth century, all Korean documents were written using Chinese characters, and most Koreans remained illiterate. In 1446, King Sejong introduced a new writing system called hangeul that consisted of only twenty-eight consonants and vowels, instead of thousands of characters. (Only twenty-four are still in use today.) It is perhaps the most unique and well-documented written language in history. Conduct research on the hangeul writing system, its development, and its logic. Prepare a creative way to share your findings with the rest of the class. Do you believe that the invention of hangeul has helped Koreans become more literate and educated? Explain.

2. Many countries honor their most celebrated historical figures by commemorating them on national currency. In the United States, most banknotes honor past Presidents and founding fathers. South Korean banknotes commemorate famous Korean scholars—Yi Hwang (also known as Toegye), Yi I (also known as Yulgok), and King Sejong. What do you think this suggests about the importance of education in Korean culture? Conduct research on one of these scholars, and design plans for an exhibit of him. Why is this person so celebrated in Korean culture? What legacy has this person left in Korean society?

3. Research the school system in South Korea. How are grades divided by school level? What subjects are taught to South Korean students? Which school does a student attend, and how is this decided? What kinds of examinations do they take? Write a research paper detailing your findings and explaining the structure of the South Korean school system. Finally, compare the South Korean school system to your own school system, and assess the pros and cons of each.

4. Research South Korean school holidays, and compare them with the holidays that US schools observe. Do South Korean and American schools observe some of the same (or similar) holidays? What holidays are observed only in South Korea, and what are the history and traditions behind them? Likewise, what American holidays are specific only to the United States? Prepare a brief presentation on your findings.

5. Design your own original project.