



Laughter

RRANCHING OUTWARDS, I began to seek opportunities for their sense of quality rather than convenience. My world expanded and I was no longer limited to my immediate familiar surroundings. For 16 months, I learned to live in South Korea where my primary interactions were with the locals. As a teacher in this new environment, the students were uncertain about me—the foreigner. It was no surprise that in the beginning there were frequent moments of awkwardness and miscommunication. I eventually let go

of seeking perfection in all of my interactions. Focusing on building relationships became more important. Celebrating the differences and taking note of our similarities changed my perspective. I began to reflect on one of the most basic commonalities that every culture has: the ability to laugh.

This photo shows my students, no longer hesitant towards me. They were letting their guards down, reveling in the joys of laughter and play. Over time, impressions changed

and stronger foundations were built. It amazed me how before I was viewed as the wary foreigner. I then became the person who they reached out for with excitement. All in all, focusing on the uniting commonality made a world of a difference.

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YOU'RE INVITED! We invite you to submit your photos along with a brief (approximately 200 words) description of why these images are important in your understanding of a person, place, idea, or incident from your experiences in international education. The photos could be of a simple moment on your home campus involving international students, a major event in an exotic location, or anything in between. The editors of *International Educator* will run selections on this page throughout the year. Please contact us for submission details at elainal@nafsa.org.