

International Network for School Social Work

<http://internationalnetwork-schoolsocialwork.htmlplanet.com>

Contact mhuxtable@olympus.net

Electronic Newsletter May 2020

Editor: Marion Huxtable

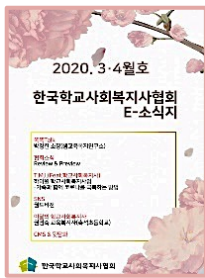
School Social Work in Korea, Now

Kyunghyun Park, (ex-president of KASSW, executive director of Education & Society)

We have over 11,000 elementary and secondary schools and there are about 1500 social workers working in various parts of the education system including schools.

China is very close to Korea and the transactions between the two countries are brisk, making Korea vulnerable to COVID-19 infections at an early stage of the pandemic. But ever since the first patient was found, the government, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDCP) and other related agencies have responded quickly and effectively. Currently, the increase in the number of infected people is flat, but we are still affected by COVID-19. Since mid-April, schools are preparing to re-open, while most classes are still conducted through online services.

Social workers at the schools, district Offices of Education and Community Education Welfare Centers (CEWC) are busy coping with this crisis. At first, many of them worked at home or took turns to work. Even now, only about one-half to two-thirds of them work in offices and the rest work from home to maintain social distance. But they try not to lose touch with the children in need. They meet children on the phone or Social Network Services, or visit homes. They are helping children stay safe and healthy during their stay at home by connecting them to information and resources. Some workers provide interesting activities that children can do at their homes to share positive and hopeful energy. KASSW (Korea Association of School Social Workers) developed and offered a guideline for school social workers along with the translation of UNICEF materials.



KASSW
Electronic
newsletter special
cover

1. Communication



Empty school corridors

Each district Office of Education continued to communicate with teachers and social workers to understand the current situation. At first, social workers made friendly phone calls to students and their parents conducting a general assessment of how students are doing and how families are managing. A social worker sent messages to the students through Social Network Services with pictures of the empty

school as an ice-breaker prior to their actual meeting and to show students how essential students are for a lively school.



Empty campus

2. Emergency Relief



Presents for home visits

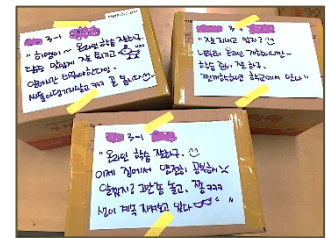
Based upon the assessment, social workers find information or connect families to resources such as crisis allowances for housing, food and medicine in community networks for families in need. In this process, some companies and charitable organizations not only raised relief funds but also donated food, mask and hand sanitizers, and locally grown agricultural products for school social workers doing home visits.

3. We are stronger



Presents left at front door

As the no-school period extended, students felt down and dull. Some didn't answer the phone. So social workers began to visit homes. To make home visits happier, they prepared books and snacks with hand-written notes. Sometimes they have to put the boxes or bags with presents at the front door. Students find a letter from a social worker and a mission note. Students and parents open the box and follow instructions in the mission note and send photos of them in action to the social worker.



Handwritten notes with loving messages

Some workers gave their students board-games to play with family members. The parents send thank-you messages that the game helped the family get along well and get closer with one another. Some workers organize on-line singing and dancing events with groups of students. Others give on-line lectures on children's rights, child abuse, love, future jobs and so on. A school social worker visited a student in the hospital. Because hospital visitation is restricted at present, the student felt lonely. Social workers also try to help and encourage single parents and grandparents who are in stressful situations.



Parents' appreciation messages



Results of a joint mission with photos sent to school social worker

Though we are in unexpected and trying times, we witness the bond between social workers, children and families, teachers, and communities stronger than ever before. Social workers are being more appreciated than they were before.