

English teachers gear up for international conference

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Korea Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages will hold its annual international conference next week, drawing speakers from across the world.

The conference hosted by KOTESOL, a professional organization for teachers of English, will provide hundreds of lectures, workshops and presentations for teachers who want to improve their skills.



This year's focus will be on the switch from information-based to inquiry-based teaching, according to KOTESOL International Conference chair Carl Dusthimer.

In the traditional method, a teacher presents a problem and shows students how to solve it, Dusthimer said. But using an inquiry-based approach, "the teacher might present the class with a real-life situation where the students have to identify a problem and then formulate questions that will allow them to discover an answer."

He said that this would ultimately go on to help students become creative and innovative in their approaches to work.

"In this approach, students, through guidance by the teacher rather than direct teaching, can have a proactive role in their education by asking questions. These questions help determine, within the framework, the knowledge they discover through a process of exploration," said Dusthimer.

"It is this 'process of exploration,' or 'learning how to think,' that better prepares students for analytical thinking and problem-solving they will need in higher education and in their careers."

Among hundreds of presentations, the conference will feature 10 featured speakers and three invited speakers.

Additionally, plenary speakers at the conferences will be educational activist Chuck Sandy, director of the International Teacher Development Institute, and Robert Murphy, founder of the Murphy School of Education, and a lecturer at the University of Kitakyushu, Japan.

Dusthimer said the main speakers were chosen for their expertise in inquiry-based learning or passion for improving the way students learn.

“We also feel it is important not only to explain a theory, but to show how the theory, or principles, can be used in the classroom,” said Dusthimer. “And taking that one step further, give participants the tools to make it happen. Our invited speakers this year are experienced in training teachers to go from theory to practice.”

In Saturday’s plenary session, Sandy will discuss ways to build bridges across the divisions between educational approaches, such as tech and non-tech, to allow educators to work in a way that makes use of everyone’s strengths.

On Sunday, Murphy, cofounder of the International FAB (brain science) Conferences, will take a neuroscientific approach to demonstrate the benefits of inquiry-based learning and provide ideas on how to put it into practice.

Key featured speakers include Lee Bo-young, a former TV teacher and current instructor at Ewha Womans University’s Graduate TESOL Program, and Jon Nordmeyer, director of international programs at World-class Instructional Design & Assessment, which works with regional education boards and international schools to help integrate language and content area learning.

Preconference workshops will be held on the eve of the conference, with full day programs in four focus areas.

The international conference will be held alongside the English Expo industry fair, which allows those attending the conference to see a wider variety of teaching resources, including online, gaming and testing materials.

“It also serves to create a more ‘festive’ atmosphere on top of the usual ‘academic’ atmosphere of most conferences,” said Dusthimer.

The conference runs Oct 10–11 at the Coex Convention Center in Seoul, with preconference workshops on Oct. 9.

For more information on the conference, visit koreatesol.org/ic2015.

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