



Donghae Sahmyook Academy in 2021.

Photo courtesy of Donghae Sahmyook Academy.

Donghae Sahmyook Academy

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Donghae Sahmyook Secondary School is located at 5367 Donghae-daero, in Donghae-si, Gangwon-do. It is a secondary school that is operated in Korea in accordance with the educational ideals of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The academy had 188 students, 24 teachers, and 28 staff members as of the end of 2020.

Developments That Led to the Establishment of the School

Before laying the foundation for an independent country with establishment of a single government in South Korea due to the division of North and South Korea after liberation from Japan, the Korean War broke out in 1950. The war caused astronomical human losses, material losses, and economic devastation.¹

It seemed difficult to expect the seeds of the gospel to be sown in Korea, where the ideologies of democracy and socialism dominated, leaving the entire country economically and emotionally destitute. Despite the disheartening circumstances that engulfed the Korean peninsula, God paved a way for the establishment of the secondary school in 1952 near the border of Yeongdong, Gangwon-do just as He did for Samuel and the school of the prophets.²

Founding of the School

Donghae Sahmyook Secondary School was founded in 1952 with the educational philosophy of restoring the image of God through harmonious education of the mind, body, and spirit. Donghae Sahmyook also aims to foster the growth of faithful Adventist youth that serve the nation and society.

When the school opened, there was one group of students in grades seven, eight, and nine. Although the scale of the school was small, it was the first step toward an education beyond what secular society had to offer. Despite the economic instability that existed before the industrial boom in the mid-1960s, there were two primary reasons for opening a Christian private school. First, evangelism to comfort the hearts of the people and draw their attention heavenward, this work began in the Mukho area, and resulted in the growth of the Adventist Church.³ Second, during a time when it was difficult for the central government to financially support the basic educational needs of its citizens, private schools rooted in church ideals filled the void.⁴

Donghae Sahmyook Academy also officially received permission from the Ministry of Education to establish Donghae Sahmyook Middle School for two classes per grade on November 20, 1967.⁵ The school is currently located in Bugok-dong, Donghae-si, but at the time that it was opened it was known as Mukho Sahmyook Middle School and was located at the foot of 167 Bugok-ri, Mukho-eup, Myeongju-gun, Gangwon-do⁶

In the mid-1970s, when baby boomers were old enough to attend school, the government found it difficult to encourage them to attend schools of higher education. As a result, paid education policies were implemented that made it possible for Sahmyook Academy to move from Bugok-dong to Cheongok-dong in 1982.⁸ The secondary school alumni regretted the fact that they did not have the opportunity to attend a high school that held to the same standards as their middle school. Hence, after relocating, Donghae Sahmyook High School was opened on March 1, 1982, and the desire for higher education in the region was kindled. In addition, Donghae Sahmyook Secondary School was designated as a recommended school district with the authority to apply for any elementary or middle school student residing in Gangwon-do at the time of obtaining permission for establishment.⁹

Initial Opening in Bugok

When the school opened on May 6, 1952, it was named Mukho Sahmyook Middle School. The school, which was in poor condition, purchased a nearby site on September 25, 1955, constructed a new building, and carried out an educational mission in earnest. The school was renamed Youngdong Sahmyook Middle School on April 14, 1956, and Jungdong Sahmyook Middle School on September 24, 1959. The reason for this change of name was that it was approved as an official school belonging to the Middle East Korean Mission.¹⁰ Since then, it has gradually developed as a secondary educational institution affiliated with the Middle-east Korean Mission. As a result, it was formally approved by the Ministry of Education in 1969.

By 1980 the school was moved back to Cheongok-dong. On May 1 of that year, a new building was built on a new site, and the school was relocated. In addition, the school's name was changed again as Donghae to the Sahmyook Middle School on April 17, 1981. And the new building (total floor space of approximately 24,000 sq. ft., and 21 rooms on the third floor) was completed on June 30, 1981.¹¹

Relocation to Cheongok

After moving the school to Cheongok-dong, the high school was also planned for establishment. As a result, Donghae Sahmyook High School was founded on March 1, 1982.¹² As the school developed, the number of students increased, which required dormitories for students. Therefore, the new dormitory building (approximately three thousand sq. ft. on the second floor) was constructed with the support of the Korean Union Conference and completed on February 3, 1987.

In the 1990s new buildings were needed due to the development of schools. In 1994 a new building was built with the support of the Korean Union Conference, and the school expanded. The new dormitory was built on October 25, 2011, and the cafeteria was built on October 6, 2012.¹³

Since 2010 information education has been required in schools due to the wave of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. In response, the school appealed to several companies to build infrastructure for Edu-Tech. As a result, the school achieved a successful donation of 100 Samsung Galaxy Note tablets (worth \$100,000) from world-renowned Samsung in March 2013.¹⁴ In addition, the teacher's building for subject classes was extended by the Office of Education on October 16, 2013. On October 16, 2014, the restroom was extended, and the natural grass playground was extended on October 16, 2015.

After relocating to Cheongok-dong for more than thirty years, seven of the schools' principals worked hard to revamp the school campus renovating the dormitory and cafeteria, for which none of this would have been possible without the caring hands that sought to fulfill the spiritual and educational aspects of this mission for the local youth.

Middle school has achieved remarkable growth over the past four years, preparing for the seventieth anniversary of the opening of school and the fortieth anniversary of the high school.¹⁵

In the past four years, rapid changes have taken place both internally and externally where the development of the school is concerned. For example, democratization, individual needs, and the direction of missions within the school demanded a paradigm shift in education. Accordingly, Donghae Sahmyook Secondary School strove to uphold the ideals of Sahmyook Academy. This institution understands that the direction of national education takes root as a village school that locals like and has grown into a school that leads local education.¹⁶

Historical Impact of the School

Missionary Achievements. Donghae Sahmyook Secondary School has faithfully fulfilled the educational mandate prescribed by the Adventist education system. As a result of implementing “A week of prayer,” approximately five students or staff members are baptized every year after hearing the gospel.¹⁷ The school also does various volunteer activities as mentioned.

The first is missionary work abroad. Every year the school sends a missionary group abroad. However, in 2020, no one went out due to COVID-19. In an attempt to keep the missionary spirit from dying, a monetary gift was sent to the conferences in both Bangladesh and Nepal (one million won each) in 2020.

Secondly, the local community welfare and community centers are visited frequently.¹⁸ Recently students went to the United States to experience various cultures, to foster global leadership experience, as well as to help them recognize the globalization of the Adventist Church (2016–2019).¹⁹

Faculty, staff, and student spiritual activities. All of the faculty and staff members start the day by having worship. This includes reading Ellen G. White’s writings and praying together. At lunch time the students and school personnel participate in corporate prayer. Pastors teach religion classes based on the philosophy of both the Bible and Pathfinders. Grace Academy is opened every Sabbath as a missionary program that reaches out to the non-Seventh-day Adventist students in our community. Twice a year a week of prayer is held to share the gospel with the students, along with a temperance week that gives insight on the perils of drinking alcohol and smoking. During this time the students, staff, and faculty members march together on the streets to promote the importance of smoking cessation.²⁰

Pioneering the local churches. In 1993 Cheongok Church was established by the school in Cheongok-dong, Donghae-si.²¹ Starting as a small church composed of faculty and staff members, it has now grown into a separate church entity from the school. It plays a pivotal role in the community as a missionary institution. This was possible as a result of the dedication and prayer of the faculty. In 2009 native English teachers started Donghae International Church as a place of evangelism to spread the gospel to foreigners in Donghae.²² The church laid the foundation for elementary, middle, and high-school students in the community to study the

word of God using English.

Growing Into a Prestigious Secondary School

In 2017 Donghae Sahmyook Middle School was designated as a leading school for the “Free-Semester System” (a program instituted by the Ministry of Education for the betterment of Middle School students). As a result of years of experience and dedication invested in helping students to further their studies and career plans, the school received a commendation from the Ministry of Education.

Furthermore, the school obtained certification in 2018 to establish a partnership between the school and the local community. Over the past three years, the school cooperative has played a role in developing the technological needs of the community. As a result, students are able to gain insight on possible career options that are authentic experiences centered around convergence and career-education projects, product manufacturing, and sales projects using 3D printers and snack-bar projects. Since its establishment, the school cooperative has increased sales more than twenty times over by 2020. In 2019 one employee was hired to work for the school cooperative, and now in 2021 there are currently three individuals that have been employed. This has resulted in a progressive cycle of job creation.²³ As well as being certified by the Ministry of Education as a career-experience institution, Donghae Sahmyook has also been certified as a biz-cool project by the Ministry of SMEs and Startups to support students’ start-up activities. Since the cooperative is virtually a community business, it provides career education related to community software for more than one hundred hours a year. In light of the aforementioned partnership and contributions to the community, the school was elected to the Handwriting Contest hosted by the National Institute for Lifelong Education in 2020 and won the National Institute of Lifelong Education Promotion Award.²⁴

Despite the plummeting number of students in Donghae, and South Korea as a whole, Donghae Sahmyook Middle School had twice as many applications from the students in the city of Donghae. Also, there are several more special programs in progress; the school was selected by Samsung Electronics as a Junior SW Academy operating school.²⁵ An orchestra was organized and hosted the first concert and was taking the lead in foreign language education through the activation of high-quality and in-depth English classes with talented native English teachers.

In 2020 COVID-19 put the world at risk and has forced all of the schools in South Korea to have remote classes. Donghae Sahmyook Middle School was already prepared to teach classes wirelessly; so, it has been designated as the leading school in Gangwon province by the Office of Education and has successfully implemented interactive remote classes. As a result, examples of interactive remote classes that took place in Donghae Sahmyook Middle School were included in the Ministry of Education’s booklet. The school was also recognized as an excellent school for interactive remote classes, receiving commendations from the Ministry of Education.²⁶

In 2021 Donghae Sahmyook Secondary School was selected to participate in the Gangwon Provincial Office of Education's spatial innovation and self-directed learning room spatial restructuring project.²⁷ The school received a fund of 200 million won from Gangwon Provincial Office of Education, giving us an opportunity to renovate the old school building. The areas that will be renovated are the front lobby, the principal's office, and the administration office. The aforementioned rooms and offices will be changed into an open library and a self-directed learning classroom. It will serve as a cultural complex with books, multimedia, and a place for faculty, staff, and students to rest.

From 2017 to 2020, Donghae Sahmyook High School's acceptance rate by universities in Seoul has averaged 35.5 percent, an acceptance rate that is far superior to that of other high schools in Donghae City. This is the result of the teachers organizing a curriculum that was suitable for an educational environment. The hard work of the teachers is marked by professionalism, dedication and the conscious effort made to help students matriculate through the college entrance process. There were a plethora of students that attended teachers' universities that eventually produced elementary school teachers. Also, in the four years previously mentioned, 42 students went to Sahmyook University to continue their studies in faith.²⁸ It is a reflection of the fact that Jesus is the paradigm for the faculty, staff, and students.

What Remains to Be Done to Fulfill Mission

Donghae Sahmyook Middle and High School are faced with internal and external issues due to the ever changing society surrounding them. Changes in national policy and the secularization of society have made it difficult to preserve Christian education. However, the saying "never let a good crisis go to waste" reminded us that Donghae Sahmyook Middle and High School should try to overcome their hardships so that the local community will recognize them as leading institutions that honor God.²⁹ Donghae Sahmyook set long-term goals to fulfill the school's mission by engaging the school body in the evangelical efforts of the Adventist Church.

Reorganize missionary activity to recover personal relationships.

Form a human network with local churches by a church planting movement through MOU with local churches and corporations entrusted in the community.

Sponsor career guidance programs for students: apply study planners in customized teaching-learning and career counseling; support the school cooperative: everyone affiliated with the school should be involved in the cooperative; strengthen practical education: gentle but strict basic education for students that teaches them consideration and dignity.

Principals Chronology

Mukho Sahmyook Middle School (1952–1956).

Yong Joon Lee (February 1952–March 1956).

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Middle East Sahmyook Middle School (1959–1981).

Han Yeoung Jeong (March 1959–March 1962 / March 1963–February 1965); Jae Sin Kim (March 1962–March 1963); Bae Hyeon Cha (March 1965–April 1965/March 1987–February 1990); Yeong Sik Moon (March 1966–August 1968); Byeong Guk Kim (February 1973–August 1975); Choon Taek Im (September 1975–April 1981).

Donghae Sahmyook Middle and High School (1981–Now).

Choon Taek Im (April 1981–February 1984); Seung Wook Shin (March 1984–February 1987); Dae Sung Kim (March 1990–February 1992); Jong Sik Lee (March 1992–August 1999); Yoon Hee Han (September 1999–August 2000); Gye Bok Lee (September 2000–February 2007); In Cheol Han (March 2007–February 2010); Dong Gyoon Shin (March 2010–August 2011); Sang Moo, Ma (September 2011–February 2014); Choon Geun Kim (March 2014–February 2017); Heeryong Noh (March 2017–).

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