



School view in 1963 before construction of the sports field

Photo courtesy of Kuk Heon Lee.

# Seohae Sahmyook Middle and High School

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## YOUNG WOOK CHO

Young Wook Cho graduated from Sahmyook University (B.A) and Kangwon National University (M.A. in Pedagogy). He served as a teacher at Sahmyook University from 1989 to 2018, and continues to assist the university as a member of the education board. Starting in 2019, he has been serving as principal of Seohae Sahmyook Middle and High School. He edited *The Evergreen Tree of Faith*.

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Located in Hongseong, Chungcheongnam-do, South Korea, Seohae Sahmyook Middle and High School has graduated 2,125 middle school students and 5,017 high school students by the end of February 2021. Currently, there are 43 faculty members.

## Establishment and Opening of School

Gwangcheon-eup is located in Hongseong-gun, one of the main areas of the Taeahn peninsula and Naepo's cultural zone in the west coast of Chungcheongnam-do. During the beginning period of Seohae Sahmyook Middle and High School many ships entered the downtown through the port of Dokbae.<sup>1</sup> Dried seaweed and salted shrimp were economically important to the area and were expected to attract large populations.<sup>2</sup> The Middle-Korean Conference (now Middle West Korean Conference) decided to consolidate Sahmyook night school in Gwangcheon, led by Kim Hyeong-Rak, and Hwaseong Middle School, located in Hwaseong-myeon, in September 1954.<sup>3</sup> Son Jae-Lin was chosen as the first principal of the school.<sup>4</sup> This was the beginning of Seohae Sahmyook Middle and High School.

## History of School

Classes were held in two tents until April 22, 1955. The Ministry of Culture and Education (now Ministry of Education) then approved the school as Gwangcheon Sahmyook Civil High School, and the school was able to officially operate.<sup>5</sup> In July 1956 the second principal, Kim Hyeong-Lahk, was inaugurated. In December 1956, 11 students graduated at the school's first graduation.<sup>6</sup> For about seven years, the school held classes in an inadequate environment—two sets of small tents. Finally, in July 1962, three regular classrooms were built and completed on the 255-square-meter property, and students were able to study in new classrooms. With shovels, pickaxes, and carts, students and teachers worked together to build a small dormitory. They worked the land with bare hands and feet and stood in line to carry bricks for the dormitory. The dormitory was finally built through the hard work of the teachers and students.<sup>7</sup>

On February 7, 1963, Seohae Sahmyook Middle School was authorized by the Ministry of Education and the Far Eastern Division as a regular middle school. On December 12, 1963, Seohae Sahmyook Vocational High School was approved by the Ministry of Education as a regular high school. In 1966 and 1967, 141 students graduated through the first official graduation ceremony. The name of the high school changed to Gwangcheon Sahmyook General High School in 1972, Gwangcheon Sahmyook High School in 1986, and Seohae Sahmyook High School in 1996. The name of the middle school was changed to Seohae Sahmyook Middle School in 1997.<sup>8</sup>

In 1995 the dormitory, which could accommodate 300 students, and the main school building were completed, and the ceremony to celebrate the completion was held. In August 2000 the auditorium and gymnasium were completed. The girls' dormitory was built in 2003 on 1,140 square meters of land. In 2007 the Hongseong Foreign Language Academy was opened with the support of the Hongseong Office of Education,<sup>9</sup> with which the school could fulfill its dream of reaching the world through educational activities with native English teachers. The school has since grown into a prestigious local school with modern facilities.

## Role of the School in the Local Community and Church

In order to foster human resources for the church's mission, Seohae Sahmyook Middle and High School continuously encourages the admission of church children and guides non-believing students in the community, with the ratio of church children exceeding 50 percent every year and the percentage of baptized students reaching 70 percent. In recent years, around ten percent of graduates have enrolled in the theology department of Sahmyook University. The school has contributed greatly to practicing the ideology of Sahmyook education and preparing church leaders for the future.<sup>10</sup>

Every summer vacation, students are sent out in community service teams and mission trip teams learn spiritual leadership. In 2019, prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, 85 percent of the school participated in the community service and mission program, resulting in two overseas teams and 17 domestic teams.<sup>11</sup> In order to foster volunteers who have spiritual leadership skills and a desire to change the world, the school strives to help students achieve the following: self-independence; intellectual and moral skills; courtesy, cooperation, and a loving manner; creativity, vision, and exploration; and health of mind and body).

In recognition of the specialized English education, the school successfully holds English camps for elementary and middle school students every summer, with full budget support from the Hongseong Office of Education and the Hongseong County Office, to show the excellence of Sahmyook education and fulfill its role in the local community. As a special education feature, a music concert is occasionally held through the operation of the Hashaba Orchestra<sup>12</sup> and the school choir, and local residents are invited at the end of the year to demonstrate the excellent music skills of the students.

## A Challenge in Crisis

As the population of the Gwangcheon area gradually decreases, the percentage of students eligible for enrollment rapidly decreases.<sup>13</sup> The school is preparing to become a key boarding school in Hongseong and trying to attract an appropriate number of students, even in the harsh environment in which five elementary schools and three middle schools have been merged over the past seven years. For this purpose, in 2021 the school received a facility improvement budget of 500 million won from the Office of Education to improve the dormitory environment and introduce programs to improve academic attainments.

In 2021 Seohae Sahmyook High School was designated as an innovation school by the Chungnam Office of Education and provided a foundation for educational innovation with a budget of 120 million won and also an assistant staff for four years. The school was chosen as a leading high school for a credit system in preparation for the introduction of the high school credit system to be fully introduced in 2025. For a classroom improvement project, the school received 470 million won; and for annual operating expenses, 25 million won. The plan is to lead in future education and to continue as a small but strong school.<sup>14</sup>

## Principals' Chronology

Gwangcheon Sahmyook School (1954-1955)

Son, Jae Rin (1954-1955)

Gwangcheon Sahmyook Civil High School (1955-1963)

Son, Jae Rin (1955-1956); Kim, Hyeong Rak (1956-1957); Heo, Eun Gu (1957); Lim, Kyung Bum (1957-1959); Hong, Hyun So (1959-1961); Cho, Moon Yang (1961)

Gwangcheon Sahmyook Middle and Vocational High School (1963-1972)

Kim, Byung Gook (1961-1967); Choi, Myoung Hwan (1967); Sin, Byung Hoon (1967-1968); Kim, Young Do (1968-1972)

Gwangcheon Sahmyook Middle and General High School (1972-1986)

Lee, Seong Jin (1972-1978) Sin, Seung Wook (1978-1984)

Gwangcheon Sahmyook Middle and High School (1986-1997)

Kim, Byung Gook (1984-1987); Kim, Hyo Sung (1987-1990)

Seohae Sahmyook Middle and High School (1997-present)

Lim, Chun Taek (1990-1998); Lee, Young Kil (1998-2000); Sim, Dong Sup (2000-2007); Kang, Seok Soon (2007-2009); Lee, Bong Kil (2009-2012); Cha, Dong Heon (2012-2015); Kim, Ki Won (2015-2018); Jeon, Seok Jin (2018-2019); Cho, Young Wook (2019-present)

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### SOURCES

Lee, Yung Lin. *A Comprehensive Study in the History of the Adventist Church in Korea*. Seoul: Sunmyung Cultural Press, 1968.

Hongseong-gun District Compilation Committee, *Hongseong Gunji Vol. 5*. Mirim Printing Company, 2016.

Korean Mission 110<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Album Compilation Committee, *Korean Mission 110<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Album*. Korean Publishing House, 2015.

Chungcheongnamdo Office of Education. *History of Chungnam Education Vol. 1*: Chungcheongnamdo Office of Education, 2006.

Hongseong-gun, *Hongseong Statistical Yearbook*. Mirim Printing Company, 2020.

News Article of Advent village, <http://www.adventist.or.kr/app/view.php?id=News&no=9400>,  
<http://www.adventist.or.kr/app/view.php?id=News&no=10434>.

## NOTES

1. It is currently closed.
2. Hongseong-gun District Compilation Committee, *Hongseong Gunji Vol. 5* (Mirim Color, 2016), 295-296.
3. This is the testimony by Jeong Heung-joo, who served as the head of financial office from April 1978 to August 1996.
4. Man kyū Oh, *History of One Hundred Years of Korean Seventh-day Adventists Vol. 2* (Korea Publishing House Seoul, Korea, 2013), 574.
5. Korean Mission 110<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Album Compilation Committee, *Korean Mission 110<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Album* (Korean Publishing House, 2015), 260.
6. Materials on the diploma of the main school, 1956.
7. Yung Lin Lee, *A Comprehensive Study in the History of the Adventist Church in Korea* (Seoul: Sunmyung Cultural Press, 1968), 165.
8. Chungcheongnamdo Office of Education, *History of Chungnam Education Vol.1* (Chungcheongnamdo Office of Education, 2006), 682-683.
9. Korean Mission 110<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Album Compilation Committee, *Korean Mission 110<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Album*: 257, 260.
10. Self-investigation results of this school 2021. 3.
11. News Article of Advent village, <http://www.adventist.or.kr/app/view.php?id=News&no=9400>.
12. In 2011, the Chungcheongnamdo Office of Education designated the Habasha Orchestra as the regional student Orchestra. They performed on KBS' national broadcast on June 28th, 2016.
13. Hongseong-gun, *Hongseong Statistical Yearbook* (Hongseong: Mirim Printing Company, 2020), 58.i.
14. News Article of Advent village, <http://www.adventist.or.kr/app/view.php?id=News&no=10434>.

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