

Learning by Cooking

Written by Miss Parichat Suesat (Kru Aan)



Hello, my name is Miss Parichat Suesat or teacher Aan. I teach Thai language at grade 3 and 4. This is an important subject, specially for children from ethnic minorities. They often don't speak a sufficient Thai at the beginning. As Akha,

Lisu, Lahu, Hmong, Thaiyai or Karen they speak their own languages.

How about a life-oriented approach of learning the language? We are learning Thai by cooking! Thai language first, yes. But the children are learning much more: a lot of cooking process skills, creative food compositions, the importance of bio food, the differences between Thai and Lanna cooking, healthy western food and unhealthy junk food, the link between nutrition and health.

The children are in the middle of all activities, our approach is child-centered. Our curriculum combines elements of various subjects and you may read it like a menu:



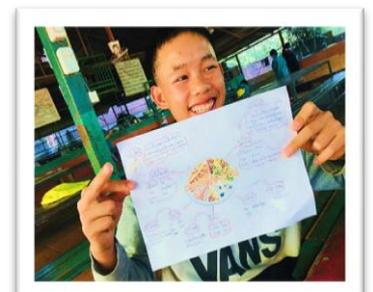
"Sing a song": We are singing about the recipes of Thai food, desserts and a variety of savory dishes. So, the students can cook and sing according to the content of recipes.

In addition, Thai language practice can be integrated into other subjects such as science. Children can learn the biology and bio-

chemistry about nutrition and various groups of food.

The children learn Thai and get skills and knowledge by preparing fried vegetables; they learn that vegetables are useful due to various vitamins and minerals, and that shrimps provides protein and fat.

The children can also develop English language skills. Children learn various words for materials used in cooking, such as dishes, bowls, spoons, mangoes, watermelon,



cabbage, etc. In addition, children also develop listening skills, express opinions and discuss with teachers and friends while doing activities.

And also every student can develop ethnic language skills. We want the students to elaborate also their mother tongue. Since in School for Life 99 % of the students are from ethnic minority groups, the teachers also learn ethnic languages from the students.

Every Saturday we go to buy foods for cooking. I take some students to help in purchasing various foods for the school canteen. By the way they learn mathematics by paying the cost of the food to the vendors, and by calculating the money to buy food enough for the whole week and for all students.

For our children, learning can occur anytime, anywhere, not limited to a small classroom with a teacher holding a whiteboard pen in front of a whiteboard, and students sitting on the chair in the classroom. In School for Life, the teachers and children are blessed with sunshine. The wind is blowing. In the canteen there are cooking pots, ladles, and cooking teachers and children. It's a great setting for learning in a wonderful nature!



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