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Editorial

When I used to participate in amateur dramatic productions and had to learn my lines, I would almost literally wear holes in my sitting room carpet as I paced and paced and paced, endlessly repeating the lines to drive them into my brain. As a student I used to create mnemonics to help me learn maths rules and classes of Greek columns, and had my friends test me on the scores of Shakespearian quotations (see page 12) I was trying to learn so I could subsequently pepper my examination essays with apparently effortless gems of someone else’s wisdom.

How do we learn? Or, more importantly, how do today’s students learn? Certainly there is room for mnemonics and working with friends to come to grips with the works of famous writers, but with the body of knowledge available to humanity doubling at an unprecedented rate, and with access to equipment and technology unheard of just a decade ago, today’s learners of all ages must learn how to use what is at their disposal to learn.

The sporting field is an excellent “classroom” as it teaches so many things not to be found elsewhere (page 6) and a farm (page 20) is an unparalleled resource not only for getting muddy and grubbing around with worms, but learning about the interconnected relationships to be found in nature. Moving from one country to live in another – as so many of today’s Global Citizens do (page 9) – presents another challenge to the learning process, yet such a move surely opens new doorways to wider learning.

Worn carpets may be a thing of the past – replaced, perhaps by steaming keyboards linked to the Internet – but learning and having fun in doing so (page 7) – is something we should never stop doing.

The Three-Generation Community is a unique educational centre. It offers Prem Tinsulanonda International School (an IB World day and boarding school), several sporting academies, a dynamic Visiting Schools Program, the exciting Traidhos Camps, an artists’ residency program, an educational farm, and a converted rice barge used for environmental educational studies of the Chao Phraya River in and around Bangkok.

Contact us

Editor  
Christopher Hall  
christopherh@ptis.ac.th

Advertising  
Ramlah Jafri  
ram.pc@chiangmaiheritage.com

Prem School  
www.ptis.ac.th  
facebook.com/PTISschool

Admissions  
melaniet@ptis.ac.th

Traidhos  
www.threegeneration.org  
vsp.threegeneration.org  
barge.threegeneration.org

Cover photograph  
Parinya Panyana
The other day I decided to buy a new camera. Upon arriving home with my purchase, I decided, for once, to spend some time reading the *User’s Manual*. Two hours later I felt exhausted by the sheer volume of information that I had been exposed to. I also felt undeniably unsure of what I had learned and, to tell the truth, a little frustrated. I was determined to get the best out of my new camera but realised that I was unlikely to do so by returning to the manual and so I reverted to my previous experience. I took out my “old” camera and took some photographs and then held my “new” camera and attempted to take similar shots. At first it was difficult as the buttons were not in the same place, the viewfinder was very different, but actually within a few minutes I was becoming successful. Then I turned to YouTube to watch two videos about the camera and only then did return to the *User’s Manual* to look at what I had achieved before proceeding to read about what my next developmental steps should be. I was learning.

Indeed I was learning, just as the students in our school learn, through constructivism. Constructivism can be applied both to learning theory and to epistemology: both to how people learn, and to the nature of knowledge. So we need to ask what is constructivism, but before that we need to understand what has preceded this approach to learning.

**A Changed Point of View**

Since the Enlightenment until relatively recently, we organised the knowledge of the world in a rational way, with clear links to Plato’s beliefs, independent of the learner most often and at times determined by some structure of the subject. We developed academic disciplines some of which were prized over others in a perceived hierarchy of learning needs. The role of the teacher was to expose the learner to the disciplines and to determine the extent to which that learner had come to terms with the knowledge thus presented. The learner either succeeded or was deemed to have failed.

The work of John Dewy, Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky and Maria Montessori, amongst others, has dramatically shifted our views on learning from the perfect world of hierarchical learning in disciplines to that where learners construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world, through experiencing things and reflecting on those experiences: which is the theory of constructivism. Constructivism stipulates that when we encounter something new, we have to reconcile it with our previous ideas and experience, perhaps changing what we believe, or maybe discarding the new information as irrelevant. In any case, we are active creators of our own knowledge. To do this, we must ask questions, explore, and assess what we know.

There will be those who argue that there is knowledge that we have to learn, which has to be taught, and I would agree with most of that but it is how we expect our learners to approach those bodies of knowledge that is important: indeed the old debate about what is taught or what is learnt. For if we plan our learning environment in opposition to the evidence that we now have about how our brains work, if we ignore the work of Montessori, and in particular that about how children are sensorial and develop long-lasting concepts about the world through their senses as well as through play, then we will ignore the needs of the learner and provide him or her with little opportunity to benefit from an approach to learning that recognises the needs of the learner over all else.
Constructivism is not a new philosophy, but new research in cognitive psychology now tends to support it. Constructivism plays a significant part in the planning for learning at Prem, as indeed it does in all International Baccalaureate schools. Yet a constructivist approach to learning will not succeed unless there is an emphasis on criterion-related (as opposed to norm referenced) assessment: where assessment judges students' work in relation to identified levels of attainment, rather than in relation to the work of other students.

I genuinely believe that a constructivist approach to learning offers our students the greatest opportunity to become flexible and confident participants in their learning, the principal protagonists and the very people who will shape the future: a future that is uncertain yet one in which they will have to excel.

Alun Cooper

Alun Cooper is the Head of School at Prem Tinsulanonda International School. He is a highly regarded international school educator with over twenty-eight years of leading schools worldwide. He has worked with the IB curriculum in the Americas, Asia and Europe, and also has extensive boarding school experience.

As educators it is important that we recognise some of the guiding principles of constructivist thinking when we consider how planning for learning must occur. In particular, we have to ensure that learning is an active process in which the learner needs to do something, we have to ensure that learning is not the passive acceptance of knowledge which exists “out there” but that learning involves the learner engaging with the world using all of his or her senses and the mind and then reflecting on what has been learned. This process is enhanced through the reliance on critical thinking and encouraging questioning that challenges what is told to them or what is discovered through this inquiry-based approach to learning.

Learning is not a race ...

We also need to plan for the fact that learning is a social activity, whereby connections with other human beings is essential and that this connection is made possible through the use of language. The language that we use clearly influences our learning and we cannot question if we do not have the vocabulary to do so. Language fluency also promotes cultural understandings and therefore permits us to consider learning in context for we do not learn in some abstract domain but rather in a number of relationships, both formal and informal, and the stronger our connections the easier it will be to make sense of what we are experiencing.

As we are planning for the learning of individuals we also need to remind ourselves that learning is not a race, that it takes time as we need to revisit prior learning, play with new ideas and compare them to previous knowledge, reflect and then to embed new understandings. Indeed no new learning is likely to take place without that sound foundation and a desire, motivation, to take the next step in a process that is both meaningful and relevant to that learner.

I genuinely believe that a constructivist approach to learning offers our students the greatest opportunity to become flexible and confident participants in their learning, the principal protagonists and the very people who will shape the future: a future that is uncertain yet one in which they will have to excel.
“Success is peace of mind which is a direct result of self-satisfaction in knowing you made the effort to become the best you are capable of becoming.”

This quote by John Wooden, the legendary American basketball coach, offers one definition of success. What does it mean to be successful? In sport, do wins, medals and trophies alone turn a season into a successful one? Is success not also achieved in large part through learning important life skills while participating in sports?

In the sports program at Prem Tinsulanonda International School, as is the case in many other youth sports organisations around the world, the concept of success has many different layers. It is very rewarding to observe teams and athletes at the school, and to see that learning is at the very core of any type of success. The improvement of a specific skill, the development of friendships and camaraderie, understanding the importance of teamwork, promoting physical and mental well-being, embracing competition, fully committing to a cause, mastering the skill of time management and positively dealing with failure are all indicators that there has been some type of success achieved during a sports season. Learning these skills will translate into life outside of sports and will serve a person far beyond time at school and university.

Recent research by the EY Women Athletes Business Network and espnW, titled Making the connection: women, sport and leadership, found that females in leadership roles in the business world are more likely to have played sports than women who have not reached a leadership level in business. This study surveyed 400 female executives from around the world and found that 94% of these business leaders participated in sports at one point in their lives. They also were asked to list skills that they in part learned from participating in sports and which have helped them succeed in the business world. The top three responses were:

- Seeing projects through to completion
- Motivational skills
- Team building

**Setting goals**

Goal-setting is a skill in itself, but there also seems to be a direct link between setting goals and the acquiring of the three skills listed by the female business leaders interviewed as part of this study, as defined goals encourage the completion of a project, provide motivation and promote the concept of a team.

As a coach, I value the importance of setting goals with my teams at the start of a season. In one of Edwin A Locke’s many studies on goal-setting, Goal Setting and Task Performance, he and his colleagues found that in 90% of their samples, setting focused goals led to higher performances. This finding can be applied to sports on the team and individual level. On one hand, higher performances may imply that a team’s results improved, but they may also mean that a player can now pass a ball accurately with both feet, assuming that the team set specific goals that will positively impact overall performance and the individual the very focused goal of being able to pass a ball with both feet. Since individual improvements directly affect team improvements, it is important to set both team and individual goals. The ability to set and follow through on S M A R T (Specific, Measurable, Assignable, Realistic and Time-related) goals, a theory attributed to George T Doran, is a highly useful life skill that is learned when participating in sports.

Athletes and coaches like to win ... and, that is a good thing. Success, however, should not be solely defined by a result. There is so much more to sports. Life lessons and skills are learned along the way. It is our belief that if learning takes place, medals and trophies will follow.

Preben Gietz

Preben is Athletics Director at Prem and holds a bachelor’s degree in psychology and economics from Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts, and a Graduate Certificate in communications and new media from the American University in Washington DC. He speaks three languages: English, French and German, and enjoys sports writing.
To Play or Not to Play

Within the last few years, high attainment levels in literacy and numeracy have been driving policy for learning outcomes across children’s education – none more so than in the Early Years sector. The expectations upon young children for mastery in these essential academic skills have been pushing the innate and vital role of play in Early Years learning out of reach for our youngest learners.

It has become increasingly clear that the underpinning philosophy of, and research into the value of play has been much ignored in the pursuit of political results. However, it is pleasing to note that the importance of play in the development of learners is now being recognised around the world. Perhaps of even greater importance is the fact that teaching beyond the cognitive readiness of young children is actually detrimental to the long-term academic success of our young learners and may even impede social and emotional development, thereby creating additional problems in the future.

While the goal of becoming literate and numerate is always the expectation to be reached, the formal teaching of these learning areas in Early Years is now widely accepted as non-beneficial in the long term. Young children are at the height of their sensory stage from the time they are born up until they reach the age of five. The brain drives the senses of the child to explore, discover, assess; to explore, discover and reassess. This is a process that takes place over and over again during the daily life of a young child, where trying, testing and trying again to make sense of his or her world is so necessary - and this process develops most effectively through play.

Play is an innate channel through which the human and animal worlds learn. It doesn’t stop in early childhood, but pushes us to learn throughout our adult years. The neural pathways are stimulated and developed through inquiry and exploration through free-flow play: play that is open-ended without set learning goals. Combining this play with child-initiated and adult-initiated play activities that are designed to meet specific and developmentally appropriate learning outcomes provides the optimum foundation for learning in the Early Years.

Play in all its rich variety is one of the highest achievements of the human species, alongside language, culture and technology. Indeed, without play, none of these other achievements would be possible. The value of play is increasingly recognised, by researchers and within the policy arena, for adults as well as children, as the evidence mounts of its relationship with intellectual achievement and emotional well-being.

Dr David Whitebread, University of Cambridge, with Marisol Basilio, Martina Kuvalja and Mohini Verma A report on the value of children’s play 2012

The philosophy of the Early Years at Prem embraces the value of play and recognises the role of the different types of play in which young children participate. These types include:

- **Free-flow play** where children enjoy their own initiated play outside a controlled environment: play is open-ended and with no set learning intentions
- **Child-initiated** play in which children make choices about their own play, but the environment of play is controlled through stimulating material and resources selected to meet learning intentions and goals
- **Adult-initiated** play is not pure play, but rather meaningful and playful activities designed by adults for young children to meet specific, cognitively and physically developmental appropriate learning outcomes.

The youngest learners at Prem are fortunate that they have the opportunity to play and that the school values that opportunity, both in terms of the right of the young child as defined by the United Nations, but also cognitively as the essential building block in the academic, social and emotional development of the child. Research indicates that play will provide the basis for a holistic learning experience and a secure foundation for future learning that is age-appropriate and meaningful.

**Mary Cooper and Tamayo Gaysek**

*Early Years Practitioners, Prem Tinsulanonda International School*
Students at Prem come from a wide variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds. As a result, they have experienced many diverse language learning pathways, both en route to and whilst at Prem. We asked our Grade 8 and Grade 9 Academic English Program (AEP) students to devise mind maps for language learning journeys and to write about their own experiences.

The mind map exercise asked students to indicate their mother tongue and to state with whom they used it. It also asked them to describe their formative school experiences of language learning, and how their learning of English had developed or changed, since they attended Prem. Finally, they were asked to indicate why learning English was important for them and what other languages they would like to acquire in the future.

Excerpts from our students’ personal language learning journeys revealed just how multi-cultural modern students are – and hint, too, at the language and cultural problems and challenges that the same students may experience.

- I was born in Laos, but my father and mother are half-Vietnamese, so at first I spoke both Vietnamese and Lao. Owen, Grade 8

- I was born in Lashio, Shan state, where my family comes from, so the first language I learned was Shan. Arthur, Grade 8

- My first language or mother tongue is Thai but as my grandparents are Chinese, they taught me a lot of Chinese vocabulary. Mameaw, Grade 9

- When I was young, my parents spoke to me in Mandarin, but my grandfather from Guangdong spoke to me in Teochew, a dialect. Sam, Grade 9

- I was born on the island of Jeju in the far south of South Korea and grew up speaking the local dialect, which can be very difficult to follow, even for people from other provinces. Tay, Grade 9

The students were exposed from their very earliest school years to different learning experiences – not all of which were happy memories. The fun of learning a foreign language soon gave way to the challenges of reading articles and learning the rules of grammar. Children were frequently challenged as their parents moved from one country to another. Arthur reported that his schooling started in Burma, then he studied in English for several years and then had to switch to Chinese when his family moved to China. Karrie, another Grade 8 student had a similar – but reversed – experience, starting with Chinese and Thai and then learning Burmese. Meenoi was one of the fortunate students who had the interesting experience of being exposed to Thai, English, Chinese and French classes during his primary school years.

Learning in an international school – where the lessons are all in English but where there are students and faculty members speaking a variety of other languages – makes life a little easier for many students, many of whom are keen to achieve near-native speaker levels. The teaching styles are also possibly very different: in some Asian countries rote learning and endless repetition are the norm. In an international school, lessons are usually more dynamic with far greater interaction between teachers, students, and their classmates – students even pick up a little Italian from friends, as Vincent has done.
Learning new languages opens up opportunities

Arthur says, “I would like to learn Spanish because I want to go to Barcelona and be able to communicate with my hero, Neymar, the footballer.” Konan says that as his father has a business in Myanmar, he would like to learn Burmese. Ploy is obviously planning ahead as she says, “I’m interested in learning Chinese: as we know, China is the world’s most populous country and knowing the language will be important for business contacts.”

Many students at Prem are true global citizens and these AEP students are rapidly becoming more aware of the world around them. “I think that in the future I will use English more, because I will need to travel to many countries and English is the main language that everyone uses to communicate,” adds Grade 8 student Pim. Recognising different demographics, John says that his wish list for languages includes Spanish as well as Chinese as “... these are global languages as well as English.”

“I hope I can learn Japanese in the future. I like to watch anime so I want to go to Japan and be able to communicate with their creators,” Fiona adds.

Japanese, Thai, Korean, Italian, Burmese, Spanish, Chinese – and English – are languages that have formed an important part in the young lives of these students and students like them at international schools around the world. Their learning journeys have thus far brought them to a point where English is the common and unifying language – but who knows where the future will lead them – or what language will be spoken there?

Catherine Piper

Catherine is AEP Senior School Coordinator. She has a Master’s degree in English Language and Literature from Edinburgh University and a PGCE in TESOL from Manchester University. She has worked for an international school and the British Council in Bangkok, and as a language advisor in the JET Program for Japanese state schools.
A New Way to Learn (continued)

In America, students might be expected to focus intensively on a particular issue, sitting in their desks, listening to lectures, taking notes, and memorising facts; whereas in IB, they would still look at that issue, but they would analyse it over time, discovering how it has impacted other parts of the world and discussing how it is connected to other issues. With the IB, students would be less likely to take notes during teacher-led lectures and more likely to work on projects with the teacher facilitating. Students are often encouraged to take the initiative, organise and complete projects, and speak in front of their classmates. There would also be more writing, as well as more activities outside the classroom, offering a more rounded approach. In addition, students are assessed using a portfolio that includes class work, information about co-curricular activities and achievements, and self-assessment.

But are they really learning?

On the other hand, in America, there is more of a focus on memorising facts out of textbooks and evaluating progress through hard-line, time-pressured, in-class testing. As students work their way through school, they may be able to recite information in each grade level and have muscled rote short-term memories, but are they really learning? Some experts argue that memorisation is a way of knowing without learning, and a way of answering without understanding. As Benjamin Franklin once said, “Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn.”

Perhaps. No matter the method, though, knowledge matters, as students would have trouble learning to reason critically without any information to reason about.

In the IB, learning is inquiry-based, meaning that the focus is on how students learn rather than on what they learn. In other words, there is a chance that many years from now, students will not remember the content they were taught as much as they will hold tight to the process by which they learned it. This offers the experience of deeper learning, where knowledge becomes relevant when fused with the real world.

In many ways, and on some days, our children miss committing weekly spelling words to memory, remembering maths facts, studying dates and names from American history, and reading American literature. Up until nine months ago, that’s all our children had ever known in a classroom. So it has taken time to massage their brains and open their minds to this new way. We are convinced that there is no one way that is better than another; for as mentioned, choosing a school and embracing its curriculum is a personal decision. In our case, we are excited to be here - 8,000 miles out of our comfort zone - and to have the opportunity to learn through a process of logical discovery and thoughtful exploration.

Jennifer and Patrick Bagley

Jen and Patrick are new Prem parents who have children in the IB MYP program (Grade 7) and the IB PYP program (Grade 5 and twins in Grade 2). The family relocated to Chiang Mai in August 2014.
More than just shopping

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Artists as Educators

Artist Residency Thailand is a unique artist training and residency program, based at the Traidhos Three-Generation for Learning in Chiang Mai. The program directly benefits the students and staff at Prem Tinsulanonda International School and provides professional development and production opportunities to artists and creative practitioners from around the world.

Strongly influenced by the UK’s “creative partnership’s model”, Artist Residency Thailand brings practitioners into classroom settings and uses their unique skills to enhance and diversify learning outcomes, empower students, create agency and provide professional development for teachers.

Created after a two-year consultancy and pilot project, the program is now accredited by the international agency RESarts, and has had welcomed dozens of artists onto the campus to work with staff and students. As well as helping teachers to achieve specific learning goals, bringing artists into classrooms also helps to encourage “agency” among our students. “Agency” in this sense is the empowerment of students to become independent learners, to follow their own lines of enquiry and to become excited about the acquisition of new skills or knowledge.

Far from simply having artists work solely in our art, music or drama departments, participants in the Artist Residency Thailand program have worked alongside teachers in our Science, English, Geography and PE classes, to name but a few.

Chemistry teacher Julie Bourget commented, “Artists can bring different angles on subjects and real-life applications into a lesson. This really helps to reinforce concepts that students are already aware of, and helps them to explore their learning, outside the classroom.”

Students also feel similarly inspired by the program. Raksin, a Grade 8 student at Prem who was introduced to Shakespeare by stage and screen actor, Miltos Yerolemou, said, “I had no idea that Shakespeare could be so intense and how much passion there is in the language.” Similar feedback can be heard from students around the school who have had the chance to engage with dozens of practitioners and whose work, passion and approach to learning have been influenced and inspired by the program.

Alex Soulsby

For more information about Artist Residency Thailand, see www.artistresidencythailand.com, or email the Director and Creative Programs Manager, Alex Soulsby: alexs@ptis.ac.th
Miltos Yerolemou

An actor known for his roles in Game of Thrones and Star Wars, Miltos is also an acclaimed Shakespearean actor, having recently toured with world with the RSC production of A Midsummer Night's Dream. While at Prem he worked with many English classes who learned that “Shakespeare is cool”.
2015 marks the twentieth anniversary of the Traidhos Three-Generation Barge Program, which has used the Chao Phraya River and land-based sites throughout Thailand since 1995 to provide environmental education experiences for students of all ages.

Change and development are parts of learning, and the program itself has learnt over its twenty-year history and evolved to represent this. The Barge Program began with barge trips along the inspiring Chao Phraya River. The concept for the entire program was to offer children outdoor experiences and see the wonders of the world, rather than the inside of shopping malls and concrete city scrapers, for people to see the environment and the importance it plays in our lives, and to develop a passion for caring for it. Over time, the program extended this passion to include land-based sites, where the message of global citizenship could also be shared.

We have helped tens of thousands of trip participants to have unique learning experiences outside the classroom, experiences that are long-lasting memories.

People never stop learning. Our entire lives, we are constantly discovering more things about the world around us, the people we work with, and about ourselves. Barge Program trips are always a place to develop these learning aspects. We become more aware of the world we live in through hands-on activities and interactive site visits.

Listening to a story of the fall of the ancient Thai Kingdom of Ayutthaya, imagining the sounds and smells of those times, as you stand in the middle of the former kingdom, while just behind you are the towering chedis that stood there at the time of those events – this combination of sights and sounds and smells creates an incredible experience that will help students to understand history in a way no ordinary classroom could offer.

Playing games that encourage students to work on their communication skills, or cooperate with others to create a team are activities that help students develop special skills that will be of significant use throughout life. Learning to use a mop, or how to cut vegetables, or even just learning to pack their own bags – these life skills are needed by everyone, and Barge Program trips offer a great opportunity for participants to be exposed to such learning for their futures.

**Different Kinds of Learners**

These hands-on approaches to living and learning create such meaningful experiences. Ask a Grade 5 student what they learnt during mathematics in class, or which books they read ... and it is likely that they will not remember. But ask them what they did on camp, and they can probably tell you every minute detail, where they went, what games they played, what they ate, who their roommate was. A few residential days each year can be life-changing. And the best part is that most of the time students do not even realise they are learning at this time!

A Barge Program trip caters to all different kinds of learners.

We incorporate multidisciplinary skills so that each trip participant has a chance to shine, to share with others, and to experience from seeing their classmates work. They will all feel a sense of gratification throughout their trip for the moment that they did or shared something exceptional with their class. Even during free time, being on-board a boat with limited space or in a field with limited equipment, the ‘power of boredom’ teaches students to use their imagination and create games to play. There are instinctively learning to be active global citizens.

With developments in educational expectations, safety standards, technology, and environmental situations, we have evolved our programs to reflect these changes and to create one of the leading environmental education resources in the region, always with the focus of providing experiential learning opportunities tailored to all trip participants.

A rice barge ploughing its way through the turbid waters of the Chao Phraya in the early 1900s was a common sight. The Traidhos hundred-year old converted rice barge is once again a common sight – but the waters may no longer be so muddy and the cargo far more precious: young minds open to learning what the world can teach them.

**Erin (Stan) Stanley**

*Stan is Head of Barge Program and has been working with the program for eight years. She has a Bachelor of Applied Science in Environmental Management from the University of South Australia and has been involved with education since 2003.*

For more information on learning opportunities on the Traidhos Three-Generation Barge, contact us at barge@threegeneration.org

http://barge.threegeneration.org
To motivate and foster the young minds of our junior grades, the Academics Committee of the Senior School Student Council (StuCo) planned a spelling competition for Grades 6, 7 and 8 as a part of their co-curricular activities. The competition was named for its simplicity as "Spelling Bee" which was organised and conducted in March.

The preparation for the competition began at least a month before the event and the committee had been working on it during the weekly StuCo meetings. The proposal was then presented and discussed with the Senior School Principal. Only after the proposal was accepted with incorporation of valuable comments, suggestions and recommendations, the committee set to work.

The students were informed and given preparation time before the first selection round. The committee, with the help of other StuCo members, went to the different homerooms with a list of ten words to test the students. The same process was carried out on the next day with another set of words. The top ten students from each grade were then selected and scored out of twenty points.

Upon announcing the top ten finalists from the selection round, the committee quickly prepared for the final round of the competition the following month. The final round, obvious to the most competitive candidates, turned out to be high-spirited and exciting. Grades 6, 7 and 8 students were seated in the Senior School Undercroft while the participants sat on the chairs in front of them. Impatience rested in their eyes while the participants took deep breaths before we set off with the final round.

The Grand Finale began with the finalists of Grade 6 who were dictated fifteen words, just as in the selection round but with a higher difficulty level. The Grades 7s and 8s had an excerpt from a junior novel with words that were jumbled for them to solve and make sense out of it. The audience was also given an opportunity to work on it so that they felt equally involved. The first round of the Grand Finale also marked the elimination round with only the top five students from each grade making to the last round. An atmosphere of tension. A few steps away from winning.

From deciding the most suitable and potential candidates to testing their vocabulary skills, the committee ensured a competitive environment for the students to exhibit their skills. The fun part was when they pondered over a new word and trying to make a guess-work; the effort of racking their brains being shown by the furrows on their foreheads.

Everything depended on the rapid-fire round for the finalists. Twenty words and thirty seconds before the winners were announced. When that was done, the committee thanked the students and teachers for their cooperation and participation. The results were announced to the students later that evening and the award ceremony followed in the beginning of Term 4.

Of course, behind the scenes were the efforts by the students in preparing for the contest. The efforts were evident in their full participation and interest, and the satisfaction earned by the committee. Seeing the way the juniors exerted their enthusiasm in answering, the committee was proud to have conducted the competition and felt a commitment to facilitate other such activities in the future. With such strong team spirit, appreciative encouragement from the school and really very generous support from our Student Council Advisor, there seems to be nothing impossible for us to achieve.

Lilly Yangchen

Lilly is a Bhutanese Grade 11 student at Prem, and a member of the Senior School Student Council.
Life-Long Learning

“As long as you live, keep learning how to live.”
Lucius Seneca, philosopher, ethicist, teacher and advisor to Roman Emperor Nero

Today we are in a paradigm of learning that challenges with information coming at greater speed than any time in human history. Education is seen as one of the greatest benefactors of the Internet, but we must recognise that access is limited to less than fifty per cent of the global population, marginalising those without connection or know-how. Technology is of great benefit to life-long learning just as is local knowledge and experiential learning is essential to our well being. As we apply knowledge to modern contexts, the value of learning must be recognised across the generations.

Well-Being across the Generation Gap

Researchers at the University of Georgia and Soongsil University suggest that elder community members contribute to well-being when able to remain active by sharing their life experience, expertise and service. When older adults are given access and opportunity to engage in a lifestyle of formal and informal learning, this in turn creates and preserves community.

The Traidhos Three-Generation Community for Learning was founded to provide life-long learning. Young people would learn with and from grandparents, and parents would be able to learn from their children. The connection with family and community is central to the ethos of Traidhos. It recognises life-long learning as essential to well-being. Traidhos fosters opportunities for all generations using local knowledge, nature and information technology. Adult programs include online courses with study groups, public forums on wellness, and workshops on mindfulness and local knowledge. Today Traidhos hosts numerous programs in Chiang Mai, on the Chao Phraya River in Bangkok and at other sites around Thailand, providing experiential learning for thousands of students from around the world.

Recently Traidhos celebrated the UN International Day of Families.

In partnership with the Foundation for Older Persons’ Development (FOPDEV), Traidhos invited families from the community to learn and to teach across the generations.

Twenty-five families visited the Traidhos Educational Farm. Khun Fong of Mae Bua, Lamphun, said, “Coming to the educational farm, as elders with our grand-children, has given us so much. We learned that we have something to teach the younger generations, and at the same time, we benefit from their inventions, for example using the bike blender to make chemical-free EM shampoo.”

Essential Micro-organisms (EM) are not new – some of the older visitors have been using these techniques for many years – but they learned new ways to make products and found the experience so rewarding they have requested a return visit to the farm for a special workshop.

The group also made traditional Lanna flags and lanterns with children’s toys from plant leaves as youngsters played with toys made from natural materials. Visiting Schools Program Thai language and culture teacher, Nathamon Kangwansong, led the group through mindfulness exercises she learned from the Mindful Schools curriculum course taken online through the wellness program at Traidhos.

This unique community for learning is rooted in respect for the environment and local culture, at the same time provides access to information technology and learning for all ages with art and well-being programs, professional development and facilities for team building. Whether on the Traidhos Educational Farm, online courses in mindfulness, or workshops on local knowledge, we are proud to be a three-generation community for learning.

Referenced from Pew Research Centre, Internet World Stats, and Adult Education Quarterly.

Lara Johnson

Lara Siree Johnson is spending one year with Traidhos as Projects and Development Manager. Formerly with the Open Society Foundations and Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health, she holds a master’s degree in public health and bachelor’s degree in environmental conservation.
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As the rainy season brings a drop in temperatures but leads to gloomy hot wet days, it is refreshing to recall the glories of the summer we have just staggered out of: days of intense heat, smoky days, dusty days, sweltering nights … and the sights of the glorious red and pink and purple and yellow blossoms on trees lining roads, in gardens, by the canals and the moats of the Old City.

Summer is not the favourite part of the Chiang Mai year for most people – but the compensation offered by the flowering trees almost makes up for the sweaty nights.

Heralding the coming festivities of flowers – and indeed the Chiang Mai Flower Festival featured in the last edition of the Traidhos Quarterly magazine – are the pink and white blossoms of the Cassia Bakeriana Craib tree – more commonly known as the Wishing tree or the Pink Shower tree, or, in Thai, the กัลปพฤกษ์ or Gunlapapreuk tree, a tree that is native to Thailand and Southeast Asia. Trees that one day seemed to be little more than bare twigs jabbed into the arid earth suddenly droop with branches weighed down by massive clusters of pinks and reds and whites. The exuberant show can start in Chiang Mai as early as February, but usually by mid-March they are in full blossom, attracting swarms of bees and butterflies.

March, April and May are perhaps the best months as the Cassia Bakeriana is joined by the Cassia Fistula, the Delonix Regia and the Lagerstroemia Macrocarpa Kurz. For the non-botanists reading this article, the names Golden Shower, Flame Tree and Queen’s Crape Myrtle may be more familiar.

The Golden Shower or Khoon in Isaan, ลมแล้ง Lom Lang in Northern Thai, or ราชพฤกษ์ Rajapreuk in Central Thai) is held by some to be a symbol of Thai royalty as its yellow blossoms mirror the traditional yellow clothing worn on Mondays, the day of HM the King’s birthday. The Golden Shower is also the National Flower of Thailand – and the State flower of the Indian State of Kerala, where it is also known as the Indian Laburnum. Its clumps of yellow blossoms delicately hang from branches and look like the intricate hair ornaments worn by Japan’s traditional geishas. As the wind blows, the flowers drift to the ground creating golden swathes of colour over pathways and roads as speeding cars stir up clouds of yellow petals. One of the most spectacular places to experience this is the two-and-a-half kilometre drive along the canal leading to the Northern Study Centre between Chiang Mai and Mae Rim, where scores of Cassias line each side of the lovely golden avenue.

A spectacular flower show

The fragrant frangipani may not have the majesty of the Cassia Fistula – but their scarlets and pinks and yellows and whites and heavy scents merely add to the spectacular flower show at this time of the year.

Several varieties of Lagerstroemiais exist in Chiang Mai, but the อินทนิลน้ำา or Inthaninahm tree is very visible in April – the month in which HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn was born. As Her Royal Highness was born on a Saturday – a “purple” day in the Thai traditions, many Chiang Mai streets are adorned with loyal portraits of the Crown Princess – and frequently these portraits are frequently located below magnificent purple Crape Myrtles.

The Flame Tree – or Royal Poinciana หร์หางนกยูง Hangnokyoong Tree – is, for me, the most spectacular of them all, with its reds and oranges and yellows as the weeks wear on and as different sub-species – such as the Var Flavida – come into blossom. A true lover of this tree could build a round-the-world journey following the life patterns of the tree in different parts of the world. Like the Golden Shower, it spreads carpets of colour beneath its canopies, and in Northern Thailand is especially attractive from April to June – so we have probably just seen the last of these scarlet ladies.

Other countries may share some of these spectacular trees with Thailand or have their own glorious autumnal shows of reds and golds and browns – but the flowering trees of Chiang Mai offer a special treat during a trying part of the year … and it is now only a few months until the whole wonderful cycle starts again.

Christopher Hall

Christopher Hall has many years’ experience teaching in Australia, the UK and Thailand. He managed special events and edited school publications for a leading boys’ school in Australia, and is editor of Traidhos Quarterly. He holds degrees and certificates from the University of Queensland, Trinity College London and Cambridge University.

With thanks to Queen Sirikit Botanical Gardens, Nathamon Kangwansong, Surachat Puifu, Thanakul Tarttong, Chumporn Khunmuang, Cecilia Yang
Lagerstroemia Macrocarpa Kurz

2014

2014
Budding Scientists

Pigs prefer banana leaves to potatoes, guinea pigs hate music (except for disco, which the females dance to), and lemon juice can be bad for mint plants. These discoveries and many other bizarre gems of knowledge were unearthed by the Grade 5 science experiments on the Traidhos Three-Generation Farm. For the past two months, the farm has been turned upside down, electrocuted, acidified, boxed in, unravelled, and analysed by our curious youth, busy distilling the essence of life.

The exploration kicked off with a reminder that we are all scientists: we have all wondered why the sky is blue, why grandpa’s nose and ears are so big (and hairy!), or how many chimps it would take to type this article. The questions pour out of us, but most people lack a framework through which to examine and begin to understand these mysterious mechanisms. Cue the scientific method: Question, research, hypothesise, experiment, analyse, draw a conclusion … repeat until enlightened.

This year, the Grade five students focused their investigations on topics that would benefit the farm and its resident plants and animals. The projects started off with a broad scope. Students were encouraged to spend time on the farm and let questions arise naturally. Once questions were pinned down, students researched their topics, made hypotheses, and designed experiments. The farm became a beehive of tinkering Teslas, hands potting seeds, labelling EM elixirs, preparing food platters for pigs (and guinea pigs), squeezing lemons, sifting worms, and getting excited to explore behaviour or symbiosis that nobody has studied in this context, or at such a young age!

After two months of heat and diligence, final measurements were taken, potions poured, and conclusions pencilled down in tattered notebooks. The time had come to crunch numbers and sift through notes, to try to find order in the squirming chaos that is life. In through the anthill and out a guinea pig’s ear, a physical and mental journey was behind them, and it was time for our scientists to ruminate.

Quad erat demonstrandum

Several days later, with all of the investigations wrapped up, we sat down to discuss everyone’s findings.

“What’s your results were dramatically different from what you expected?” I asked.

One boy timidly raised his hand, “My lemon EM (Effective Micro-organism) was supposed to get rid of bugs, instead it attracted more of them!”

Silence fell across the class: Had science failed us? Where do we look when black turns to white? When the sea boils red and our eyes spin like rogue billiard balls, when all we held safe and sure in our minds is shattered. Dry lips smack and sweat streaks across our foreheads. We lose our footing and just before lunging into hysteria, a firefly sparks in one boy’s eye.

“That’s great!” he squealed, “we can use lemon EM when we want to find insects.”

The revelation moved through the room like kernels in a corn popper. The class discussed how finding something different from what was expected is not only fascinating, but every bit as valuable as finding support for the original hypothesis. When you embark on a scientific investigation, you will always learn something!

“Who thinks they could be a great scientist some day?”

All hands were in the air.

**Ryan Garrett**

Ryan is the Traidhos Farm Systems Manager and Education Facilitator. He has a BSc with Honours in Biology from the University of Oregon, where he was also the McNair Research Scholar and Gilman Scholar for Research Abroad. He has worked on projects in Ecuador and Colombia and was Laboratory Manager in the Schofield Laboratory, University of Oregon.
Alumni News

Hannah Hagen, Class of 2017

I have just completed a one-semester stay at Prem Tinsulanonda International School: I wanted to go to Asia from my small hometown of Starnberg (Southern Bavaria, Germany) to experience a different culture and to study in English to improve my English skills.

The reason I applied for a place at Prem was that the campus is very appealing, the school is highly recognised for its educational standards - and an aunt who lives in Chiang Mai recommended it to me. I was very happy that Prem accepted my application for enrolment in a Grade 10 class for just one semester. I really enjoyed studying at the school and I am proud and thankful that I could be a part of it. In comparison to German schools I was impressed by how much we worked with computers during class, which strongly helped me to expand my IT skills.

Teamwork between students, and communication between teachers and students were very intense and motivating. These helped me feel comfortable and fully accepted at the school, where I made friends for a lifetime.

Sailing has been my passion since I was six years old. I have participated in many competitions every year and continuously improved my sailing skills. In 2012, at the age of twelve, I became the German Champion in the Optimist boat class. In the same year I was the only German girl who qualified for the Optimist World Championship in Boca Chica, in the Dominican Republic.

After this success I changed to 420 sailing, and participated in the 420 Open World Championship in Valencia, Spain, with my older brother as helmsman. Since June 2014 I have been sailing with my new helmsman, sixteen-year-old Anna Bergauer. After intensive training last summer, we qualified for the Women’s World Championship, which will take place in Japan in July 2015. It is a great honour to be one of the three women’s teams from Germany.

When I returned to Germany after my delightful stay at Prem I continued my preparation for the Women’s World Championship and look forward to writing to tell my friends at the school how we fared in the Championships.

Hannah is able to offer exclusive advertising rights with sponsors’ names on the sails and hull of her boat, and on team uniforms. Readers who would like to support Hannah and take advantage of her international visibility at the world championships may contact her at hannah-hagen@web.de.
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