

How much work is MEP really?

By Emma Thorpe

The MEP program at Thidamaepra School stands for 'Mini English Program'. Naturally, that makes no sense when the IEP, 'Intensive English Program' has less contact hours, but that's just the way it is. Working for MEP is a lot of fun! It comes with a lot of hard work but alongside many privileges and advantages too. The workload in MEP is at first challenging, especially for a first time teacher, and you can often find yourself putting in a few hours outside of school. During an average school day in MEP you will teach Maths, English and Science; that means approximately 3 hours with the same bunch of kids each day! Here's a short list of some of the main responsibilities an MEP teacher should be expected to do at Thida.



1. Planning

Of course, with every teaching job comes preparation. No matter how experienced a teacher may be, a successful lesson needs a plan. The great thing about MEP is that there's a lot of freedom and flexibility in the classroom, there's no set way about how to deliver material, only that you use the textbooks as a guide. Once you establish your weekly targets, planning how you're going to teach them is usually fairly easy. After you begin to naturally memorize a long recycled list of games, it's easy manipulating games to fit specific targets. Fortunately in MEP, every classroom is fitted with a projector giving each teacher the flexibility to plan presentation slides, play interactive games, listen to songs and watch education videos. You can find an abundance of great videos on YouTube, particularly for the younger levels. There are also large amounts of flashcards available to use, which are great for memory or matching games. The experiments and projects are always a lot fun to plan too!



2. Homework

Setting homework is another crucial thing about MEP. Obviously the amount of homework really depends on the grade level you teach. For example, I teach Prathom 1 and I try to set homework in 2 subjects every single day. Perhaps one day might be an English worksheet and some reading from the Science student book. Other days might be a spelling list for English and a couple of workbook pages for maths.

3. Grading

Grading books, tests and worksheets is something we have to try and keep on top of in MEP. It's not an easy task with each student owning at least 9 different books specifically for MEP. A student book, a workbook and a notebook are issued to each student per subject. As well as correcting mistakes, finding a quick and easy mark that resembles the students effort works well in getting through large amounts grading. For example, 1 star = Good, 2 stars = Very Good, 3 stars = Excellent.



This method I find works very well with the younger students.

4. Testing

MEP teachers are required to test the students regularly. Each Friday is 'Quiz day' at Thida and most students will be expecting a test. In MEP, the flexibility allows us to give either a listening, speaking, reading, writing or spelling test in any subject that you think may be most relevant for the week. It's usually a good idea to test the students in MEP twice a week to ensure you have enough grades by the end of the semester.

Testing is usually out of 10 available points, but flexible depending on the material you choose.

5. Exams

The students sit exams in English and Thai twice each semester. These are called, Midterms and Finals. In MEP the teachers for that grade level are required to write the exams. The students take 6/7 exams in total in MEP- English, Maths, Science, Speaking, Listening, Reading (and Writing). We are expected to give the exam during class time and are then given two days off timetable to grade them. The students, teachers and parents take testing at Thida very seriously so it's a really great time to differentiate between the varying ability of your students.

6. Assemblies

MEP teachers are required to deliver assemblies on various days throughout the week. Rotating in pairs means your assembly day will fall approximately every two weeks. Assembly is really easy and really fun once you're out there. Typically, teachers play a game or present an activity that involves the students speaking English. The A3 - P3 students love to get involved but it's sometimes a little more challenging trying to get P4 - P6 involved.



7. Break times

Again, the break and lunch time duties work on a rotation so that your day will fall once a week. Teachers are required to be outside interacting and playing with the students for approximately 20 minutes during a single break time. You'll usually find that you're swamped by most of the younger students or by those that you teach.



8. Camps

Across the year, as a Super English employee you are expected to work a maximum of 2 camps per semester. These camps can vary across MEP, IEP or Teacher camps. MEP usually has 1 major camp each year, the 'MEP away camp'. This year we travelled north up to Hua Hin where we carried out this year's 'Around the World Camp'. The away Camp usually involves leaving school on the Friday and returning back to school on the Sunday evening. It's certainly a long, jam-packed weekend but always a fun and memorable one for everyone. As well as the away camp, MEP also likes to do an in school camp, which this year is taking place during Semester 2. It has a similar set up to most camps where the students rotate through several different stations with regular intervals for assemblies, fun and games.



9. Events

Special events in MEP can vary depending on the grade level you teach. Sometimes we are expected to help the students prepare for speech competitions that happen outside of school. Other events can include Science fairs, Christmas fairs, Temple visits and Sports Day, not forgetting the special holidays in Thailand too, like Loy Krathong Day, Mother's Day and Father's Day. One event we get to organize ourselves is the Spelling Bee competition. This is an event that's organized by us and preparing your students is always a lot of fun. The students and parents take the Spelling Bee very seriously and the results are always extremely impressive.



10. Having fun!

Most importantly, having fun in MEP is certainly the easiest of them all. The flexibility in MEP allows us to teach and present topics or ideas however we like. Being able to develop your own teaching style at a pace that suits you and your students allows more room for creativity and experimentation. Adjusting to MEP takes time, things won't fall in to place right away, that's ok, try things out, experiment, have fun and most importantly, take the time to get to know your students. Before you know it you'll become more and more familiar with your day-to-day routine, planning will take half the time, and it'll soon be October break!