

You Down with MEP? Yeah You Know Me!

The MEP program at Thidamaepra school was started in May 2013. It began as a school for Anuban 3 students, who are about 5 and 6 years old, going up to Prathom 5, whose students are around 10 and 11 years old; however, it is moving forward towards older grade levels. It is the first program at Thida to teach Math, Science, and Health in the English language along side with teaching English.



MEP building

Photo Credit: Levi Shand

Description:

There are now 3 buildings at Thidamaepra school: Old Thida, the biggest and oldest building, New Thida, the round, almost spaceship-like building, and finally the newest, and smallest MEP building. Don't let size fool you however, the MEP building is one of the nicest on campus.

The building houses 8 classrooms that are all equipped with 2 air-conditioning units, a projector, 2 in-room bathrooms, and 2 balconies with accompanying sinks. Having the projector in the room is a great resource for teaching, especially for science when some terms are better explained with pictures and/or videos.

Unlike Old and New Thida, the class sizes in MEP tend to be smaller with the largest class size being 35 students. This may seem daunting to new teachers, but compared with the 55-60 students in the classes at the other buildings, 35 is a very welcome



Morning Assembly

number. In its first year, the total population of students in the MEP building was 204, so every student will know your name.

Schedule:

Your schedule will vary depending on what level(s) you teach and if you pick up any outside hours, like private

classes with Super English. Typically, the MEP teachers teach for 2 hours in the morning, Math and English. From here are where the discrepancies occur. After these first 2 hours, you might teach a section of IEP or a regular English class at New Thida. Then after lunch, you may have no classes depending on the day, or you may teach Science, or an IEP or regular English class at New Thida. Once a week you will teach Health class, most likely in the afternoon. An MEP teacher usually teaches around 20 hours a week, unless you pick up extra hours with Super.

Requirements:

Classroom: In the classroom, you will have different textbooks, which are very helpful in planning lessons, and are required for almost daily use when teaching. The director, Sister Nara would like for us to really utilize the text and have it as an accessible classroom tool for the students. The books are set up in a such a way that makes this possible. For example, each chapter in the English book begins with new vocabulary and

a dialogue. These dialogues are a great tool to familiarize the students with new conversational questions that are suggested throughout the chapter. From here, there are different exercises incorporating the vocabulary and questions that were previously introduced.

There is a corresponding workbook for each textbook that allows the students to further practice the newly learned targeted information. In addition to this workbook, each student has a notebook for each subject that helps them practice their writing skills as well as gives them an area to write down meanings for vocabulary words or other notes you might give. These latter mentioned materials need to be collected each week to check for mistakes and then handed back to the students either the same day or the following. We do not check notebooks or workbooks on Fridays as those are test days. Some teachers set up particular days for collecting notebooks, where others let a time happen organically when they see they need to be checked.

Paperwork: Luckily for everyone, there is not very much paperwork required for any of the Super teachers at Thidamaepra. MEP

teachers are asked to write a syllabus at the beginning of the semester. This may seem like a daunting task, but it really comes in handy by helping you stay on track, plan, and even write your tests.

Another requirement is monthly reports. These reports will be for each subject (math, science, and english) and for you IEP class(es). The reports should be no less than one



Tug-of-war: if you don't have rope, pull on each other!

and a quarter pages long, and will include such information as vocabulary, main targets, execution of said targets, units completed and student progression.

We are also required to quiz our students. A grading sheet will be given to you for each subject, including two for English for speaking and writing. Each subject has a different



All dressed up for Mother's Day

amount of grades to be given throughout the year, with a midterm and final grade for each semester. For most of the subjects, there are different total grades for each quiz or assignment ranging from 10 to 30 points, but the midterm and final grades are all weighted the same at a total of 20 points each. The way you give these grades are up to you. You may decide to quiz your students, or maybe you want to give a writing assignment, a project, or some homework. Whatever you decide is fine as long as you can fill in your grade sheets appropriately.



We are very serious at MEP.

As for the midterms and finals, you will be writing these yourself. As each test is weighted at 20 points, you should write 20 questions. These will be mostly multiple choice with some fill in the blank questions as well.

Thida

prefers to have a 90% to 10% ratio with the focus being on multiple choice questions. Writing these tests will also help you plan ahead so you can set a goal for the end of the term.

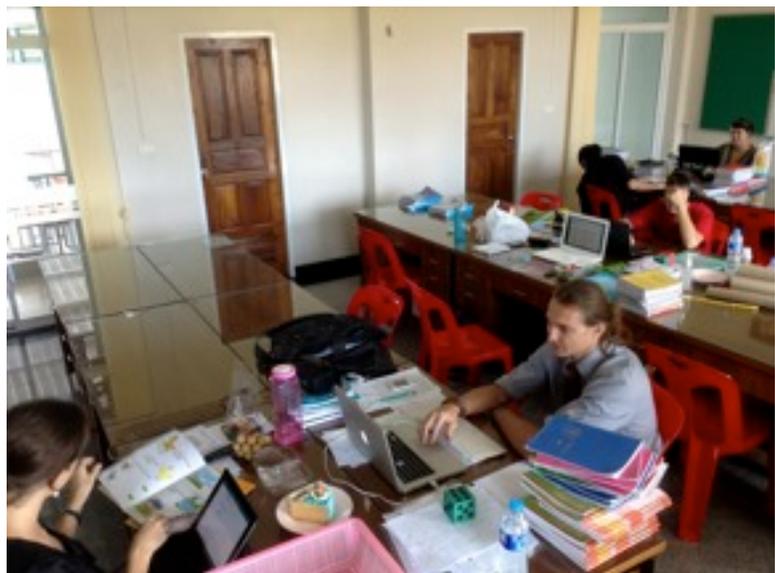
Outside of Classroom: Every morning there is an assembly at 8:00am. Three days a week, the MEP teachers will get up in front of the students and do various kinds of things from dialogues to games to songs to telling stories.

This is a great opportunity for the

students to hear the English language being used by a native speaker as well as give the students a chance to practice their English by either answering questions or participating in the dialogue or some other activity. Additionally, Mondays are club days. Clubs are a very open environment for any kind of activity as long as the students are practicing their English in some way. Some of the clubs that are offered now are sing-a-long, movie-watching (and answering questions about the movie), and acting.

What a Class is Like:

Teaching MEP is great. You really get to know your students because you will see them for a majority of your teaching time.



In the office

This allows you to learn all of their names, their personalities, their strengths, weaknesses, what they like, what they don't like, etc... All of this will come pretty quickly after you first meet your students and all of this information will set the tone of your class from how to plan to how to test to how to grade.

Depending on what you are teaching in your class, it is best to start with a review of the previous day's lesson. This can be done with a quick question and answer session, writing some reminders on the board, or playing a game. The latter option is what the students love the best. From here, start your new material for the day. Incorporate your students, a video, another quick game, a song, or other kinds of fun activities to really get your students interested in the topic. It's best to present the information and then practice



P1s are ready for lunch!

it as well, so after a mini-lesson that may involve some of the aforementioned activities, have the students either write in their notebooks, do a worksheet, or complete pages in their workbooks. Make sure to reference the textbook at least 4 days a week as this is a great resource and it makes the Thai teachers happy.

My class and I always have a great time together. If I see that blank, glassy-eyed look on their faces, I will take a “brain break” and we will do a completely unrelated fun activity for a few minutes before going back into the topic at hand. This way the students don’t stay bored and their energy gets flowing so that they are better able to learn. I also have some really great classroom management systems in place and each of my students behave wonderfully (for the most part). In my class, the systems I have set up include a whole class system, a 3 group system by rows, and an individual system. This allows for many different ways to earn or lose rewards.

Tips for Success:

As I mentioned in the above paragraph, my class runs like a well-oiled ship and I tribute that to my classroom management systems. Having good classroom management skills and systems are some of the most important things needed to succeed in any classroom. Each class is different; therefore, each class will respond to different kinds of management. A very popular management system is the 5-4-3-2-1 countdown to get your students’ attention. Thida students have been learning this attention call for many years from previous Super English teachers; thus, it is one that is recognizable to them. You may find, however, that you would like to add some other management styles, just as I have.

Putting in the effort to get to know your students from day one will also really help you in the long run. Not only will you learn how to teach to your students, but they will also appreciate the effort. When your students like you, they are more willing to participate and behave so that they are fully able to put their best foot forward.



P2s working on a science project.

Additionally, if you make it a point to become friendly with your Thai teacher, you'll see that they are more willing to help as well.

Finally, make sure that you use all of the resources that are available to you as an MEP teacher. We are lucky at MEP to have more than the other teachers at Thida. In the



Test Day!

teachers' office there is high speed internet so that you can plan the best lessons possible. The internet also reaches into the classrooms for those times when you need to look up something on the spot or want to stream a video. Using the projector in the room is also a great resource that will help to make your class successful as they can watch videos, look at pictures, or do interactive activities while learning.

Expectations:

From Peter: "Overall, I expect MEP teachers to do whatever it takes to make the program successful. That is pretty general, but the goal of making each class a success is the most important thing for me. Teachers are given a large amount of empowerment and there are basically no checks on who is doing what and how they are doing it. As such, I have to be primarily concerned with the bottom line. For me, that is happy students, happy Thida, happy teachers and happy parents. If the teacher is doing whatever he or she can to make their class as good as it can possibly be, the rest will fall into place.

More specific expectations:

Since we don't require lesson plans, class procedures, or any other substantial paperwork, teachers are individually responsible to plan and prepare for their classes. I expect them to do so in whatever way works best for them.

Since the MEP program, as opposed to IEP, is more integrated with the Thai system, I expect MEP teachers to be understanding of the frequent changes that can occur. These changes can lead to confusion, more work, and frustration. MEP teachers need to be more flexible and patient when it comes to working with a Thai school.

I expect MEP teachers to communicate with each other and ask for help when they need it. If they are having problems or difficulties in the classroom I expect them to let me know so I can help them and avoid Thida getting involved.

I expect MEP teachers to put in a good amount of hard work, effort, energy and creativity in order to produce top results in the classroom.”

What to expect:

Expect to have fun! Most mornings I'm not quite awake when I arrive at the MEP building, but as soon as I start teaching I wake up. I don't even feel the need to drink coffee in the mornings anymore! As I have mentioned previously, getting to be with your



Picture day, yay!

students for longer periods of time means you will get to know them better and you will be able to have more fun with them because you will know their personalities.

Also, don't come in thinking that the job is going to be easy. It takes a lot of planning in order for your lessons to turn out well and for you students to better understand the targets. Granted, the job is not a difficult one, and one that is fun, but it does take effort and without that effort, it will not be successful.

Finally, expect changes. Thailand is never set on anything. When coming into this occupation, have an open mind, be willing to change at the drop of a hat, and learn to go with the flow. Doing this will make your life much easier. Thailand is a laid back country that is easily adapted to. It may take a little while to get used to the way things run here, but once you do you'll realize it's nice to not be so rigid all the time.

From the Teachers:

“I enjoy how MEP feels like a small school within itself.”

“It feels more like my class than being a guest.”

“I like the relationships with the kids and the one on one time.”

“There is a better dynamic because you get to know your students as individuals.”