

# The Mechai Bamboo School

A Lifelong Learning Center for all



and a hub for social and economic advancement

The Mechai Bamboo School is an innovative secondary educational institution which is also engaged in community development. This rural boarding school was established to become a lifelong learning center for all and act as a hub for social and economic advancement in surrounding villages.

The school has two arms: the first is an educational arm which operates the school for 180 students. The second is a community development arm which provides assistance and cooperation to small rural schools and their surrounding communities. The school is located at Lamplimat district, Buriram province of Northeast Thailand.

The school's objective is to foster good citizens

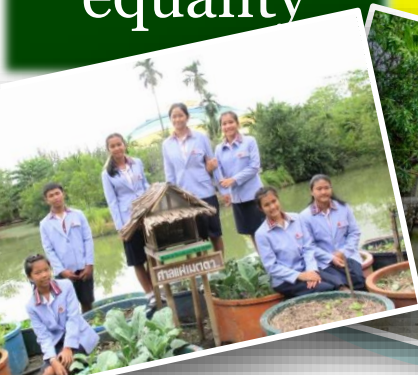
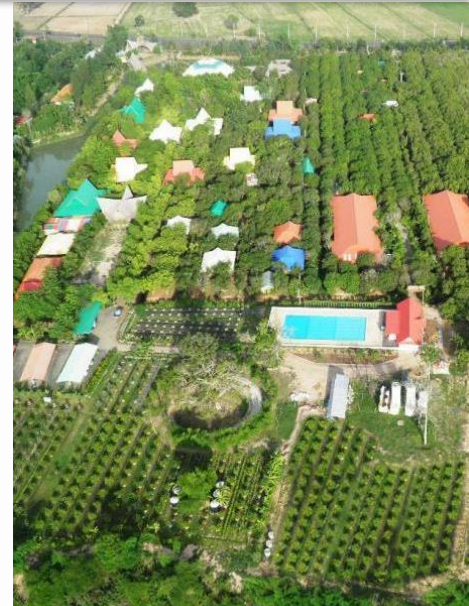
Who are **honest**  
and **willing**  
to share

Possess Life skills  
& occupational skills

**Good Citizens** Know how to manage

**Community Development leaders**

**Practice**  
and **promote**  
gender  
equality



Students make trees and walkways colorful

Students interview and select teachers





Students are required to sit in a wheelchair for one day per month in order to experience the realities and difficulties of life of a person with disability and to have the desire and determination to improve the situation of people with disabilities. As part of their learning process about people who are less fortunate, students also forego their evening meals once per week in order to experience hunger, as this situation cannot be learnt from a book.

May WE bring  
**LOVE** where there is hatred  
**HEALING** where there is pain  
**HARMONY** where there is discord  
**LIGHT** where there is darkness  
**HOPE** where there is despair  
**PEACE** where there is strife  
 May this world be a better place  
 and let it begin with us



Training students from local schools in life saving swimming lessons



Bamboo School Students sending their good wishes to earthquake victims

School fees are jointly paid by the students and their parents in the form of community service and tree planting. Parents and students are required to share the responsibility of 800 hours of community service and the planting of 800 trees per year. By the time these students have completed their secondary education, they will have planted 4,800 trees and, together with their parents, experienced the joy of doing public good.



Teaching music to students with disabilities



Ready to plant trees



Health survey of elderly villagers



The school believes that discipline is a most important characteristic of a good Thai citizen. Apart from other measures to promote discipline among the students, it has introduced limits on the use of mobile telephones to one hour per week. Students are also required to write three letters to parents, friends and important leaders.



Letter writing in lieu of telephones

The school imparts students with life skills and occupational skills and encourages them to be innovative and to think outside the box. They are involved in many of the management aspects of the school through a Student Cabinet and student operating committees, starting with welcoming guests. Students are responsible for all purchases of the school, conduct audits and take charge of the selection of incoming students as well as the recruitment of new teachers. Older students are responsible for taking care of their younger brothers and sisters as well as the care and upkeep of the school's facilities.



Students welcoming the Deputy Prime Minister



Surveying vegetable prices at the market



Vehicles purchased by students



Bamboo School students interviewing student applicants



Cleaning duties



Audit Committee checking purchased goods







Bamboo School students spend one semester as “visiting students” in international schools

The learning atmosphere at the school comprises sessions inside and outside the classrooms as well as outside the school compound. To further their experience in life and occupational skills, students are given the opportunity to be trained and employed during holidays in companies, hotels, hospitals, universities and institutions caring for people with disabilities.



Learning outside the classroom – goat raising



Learning outside of school – at parliament house



Summer job in restaurants

Classrooms and school facilities are made of Bamboo and include **the world’s largest bamboo geodesic dome**, based on the design of the world famous American architect, Buckminster Fuller.





The school has developed a small model vegetable farm, which requires little land, little water and little labour and enables the crops to thrive on extremely poor soil. This small plot agricultural concept has gained much popularity and acceptance by many small schools and surrounding communities.



Vegetables in recycled bottles ...



... and baskets





A business loan fund is made available for students to engage in group businesses. This will enable them to learn about business entrepreneurship and to equip them with the option of becoming self-employed or employers after they complete their education. This experience will prepare them for their world of tomorrow without having to migrate to urban settings.

The types of income generating activities carried out by the students are varied. Student businesses range from vegetable growing to animal raising, food products, production of solar-powered torches and water pumps, water catchment jars, coffee mugs and the sales of goods and services. As a Lifelong Learning Center, the school also provides business training to villagers in surrounding communities, ranging from vegetables to out-of-season lime and food processing.



Student Ice-cream business



Vegetables grown in laundry baskets



Students sorting 1,000 chicken eggs per day



Solar torches made by students



Female students making water jars



The students of the Bamboo School have also established a training facility for wheelchair-bound people to learn how to grow vegetables. This “Wheelchair Agriculture” model has been launched in schools for students with disabilities through the assistance from the business community. It is our desire that people with disabilities will be able to earn income at home while staying with their families.



Deputy PM experiencing wheelchair agriculture



As the activities of the Bamboo School became widely known, many institutions and schools have asked for our cooperation to introduce our “Lifelong Learning Center” concept in their schools. The most significant and sizeable group seeking our cooperation was the Association of Small Community Schools of Thailand, which requested our assistance to establish a “Poverty Eradication Farm” in their schools. The three requested components which were relayed in their official request to the Bamboo School were:

1. “To supplement the current government core curriculum by introducing a more dynamic and relevant approach to education.”
2. “To enable students and community members to acquire agriculture and business skills through the school.”
3. “To assist small schools to become community business and lifelong learning centers.”





The Bamboo School was able to achieve the cooperation and financial assistance from the business community to launch the **“School-Based Integrated Rural Development” (School-BIRD) Project**. This project has assisted, on average, forty schools per year to become Lifelong Learning Centers and hubs for social and economic advancement with strong participation from members of the surrounding communities and the local government. There are four types of activities :

1. Community Empowerment and Training in Agriculture and Business for Villagers, Students and Teachers
2. Poverty Eradication Farm at the School
3. Business Loan Fund for Students and Poor Parents
4. Water, Dental Hygiene and Sanitation



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