



Rural Training Center-Thailand (RTC-TH)

## REEEPP 2007 WINTER PROJECT FOLLOW-UP

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Community-based environmental education for the self-sufficiency and sustainability of small rural family farms



*Students using the new RTC-TH pdf lessons in the lab.*



*They see themselves and friends in the lessons.*



*RTC-TH lessons supplement Thai Ed Sat lessons.*

### ELEVATED ENGLISH ENTHUSIASM

A month after the Winter 2007 Volunteer effort, RTC-TH staff worked with Na Fa Faculty to review the project. Everyone is still enthusiastic about learning English!

It was evident to everyone that students were more keen than every to learn English. One girl, Namfon, set up her own souvenir notebook for the event. She had a page set aside for each volunteer with their photo. She got brave enough to ask the volunteers to write something in the book. It will certainly be a unique memento of the REEEPP volunteers.

The RTC-TH lessons are full of pictures taken locally. Students recognize the places, objects, and people from their daily lives. But the lessons use English to talk about these familiar things. This enables the RTC-TH lessons to directly support the English teaching effort at Na Fa. "We want the students to be able to use English in their daily life," was the request of the Na Fa teachers. Now the students can match the English to the pictures, their personal knowledge and Thai language.

This winning combination is almost magical to watch. Students eager go over the lessons. Pens and notebooks are poised to copy new words and sentences. "It is very, very refreshing for me to see students so eager to learn," quipped Greg Lee. "It makes it all very worthwhile!" ☺



## RTC-TH PDF\* PHOTO LESSONS

The RTC-TH made a concerted effort to create more pdf lessons for the Na Fa Elementary School lab. Most of the English books in the school are of foreign origin or developed in Thailand but strongly influenced by foreigners. They are predominantly urban oriented, replete with scenes and situations in stark contrast to rural Thailand. So the RTC-TH pdf lesson effort strives to use local photos and situations as much as possible.

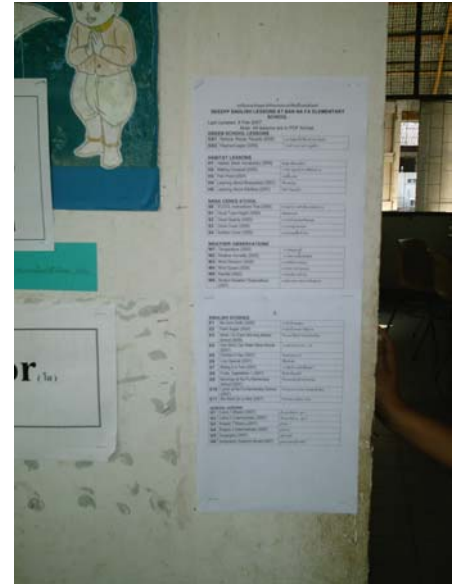
Of the 34 pdf lessons on the 4 computers in the school's lab, about half were created in 2005 to directly support the 3 initial REEEPP projects (Green School, Habitat, and NASA CERES S'COOL). For the Winter 2007 REEEPP effort, the RTC-TH created 2 new Habitat lessons, 1 new weather story, 7 new general topic lessons, and 7 new English stories about daily activities.

The stories were created using PowerPoint, reviewed by Na Fa teachers before being loaded onto the lab computers. This procedure assures the lessons meet the needs of the teaching program at Na Fa. The RTC-TH strives to provide curricular and technical support for the school rather than impose outside ideas. Success for the program depends on teachers and students using the materials. It doesn't make sense to make lessons that don't get used. The rapid implementation and use of the lessons is living proof of REEEPP's effectiveness. ☺



*Cleaning up after lunch, a familiar daily routine, and subject of an illustrated RTC-TH English pdf story.*

\*PDF refers to the portable document format used by Adobe Acrobat reader documents making it easier to exchange documents between different types of computers.



*Bilingual list of the 34 RTC-TH pdf lessons available on the lab computers.*



*A student hike inspired another English pdf lesson featuring the students in the story.*



*Students in their routine start of a school day become "stars" in an English story about this daily activity.*





## THE HABITAT HABIT

It's hard to imagine how the Habitat program could be doing better at Na Fa. Students are actively engaged in caring for the numerous Habitat garden beds on the south side of the campus. Boy and girls are equally engaged. This is another school routine than can become an illustrated pdf lesson.

The flowers from the gardens provide basic materials for the traditional arts and crafts classes. Many of the festive arrangements for school and community activities are made using all the methods taught in class.

It's also surprising to see how much work in maintaining the school is in the hands of the students. From cafeteria clean-up to campus litter / recycling pick-up, all these activities are a stark contrast to schools in Los Angeles.

There is another dimension to the Habitat program at Na Fa----the weekly mosquito hunt. Each Friday afternoon, all the students are organized into teams. Each team covers a portion of the school. They disperse to find mosquito breeding habitats on campus. Each team has a small plastic bottle containing a solid form of mosquito larvicide. When they find mosquito larvae, they treat the breeding site with the larvicide.

By coincidence, a new RTC-TH pdf lesson focused on learning about mosquitoes. Two additional lessons are planned for preventing mosquito bites and countering mosquito breeding near homes. The Habitat lessons all stem from use of the Geographic Systems Model and the fundamental elements of a habitat.

On this particular day, the discovery of some mosquito larvae provided an opportunity to use a microscope to examine specimens of larvae in different stages of growth, empty exoskeletons, as well as spiders and ants found in the Habitat gardens.🐞



*Students actively care for the Habitat gardens.*



*The flower petals are used in traditional arts & crafts lessons*



*The weekly mosquito control hunt is another way to study Habitats.*

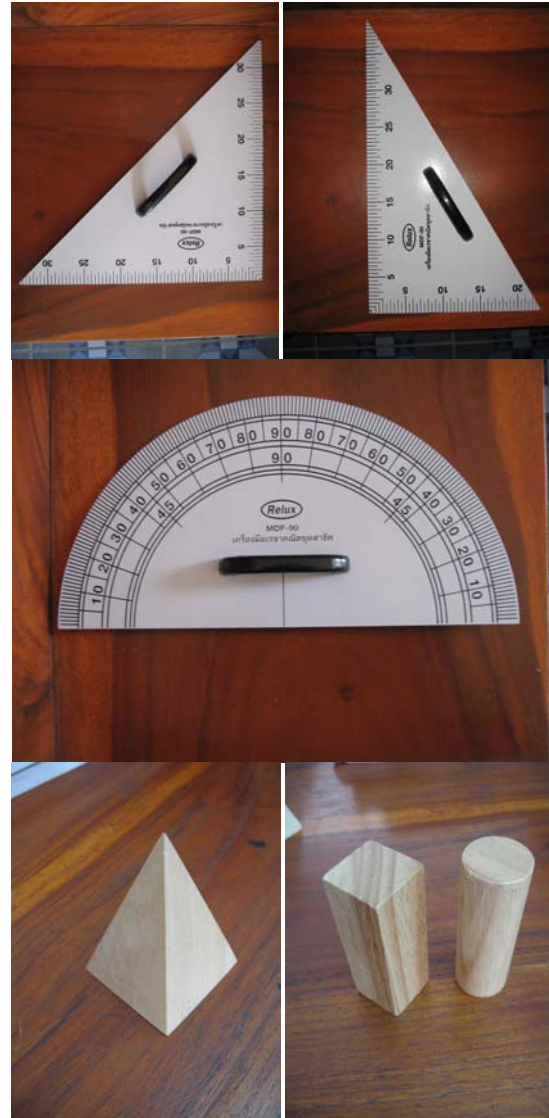
## SERENDIPITOUS SYNERGY

Two new RTC-TH general lessons involved basic plane geometry ((Basic and Intermediate Shapes). These lessons introduced the basic English names of the more common plane shapes. The Intermediate lesson incorporated “seeing” shapes in the classroom, around school, and in common objects (e.g. signs, symbols, logos, etc.).

As luck would have it, some of the RTC-TH funds donated to Na Fa Elementary School for books, materials and supplies included equipment for teaching geometry. One item was a set of triangles, protractor, and drawing compass for use on the chalk board. Another item was a set of wooden solid geometric shapes. (Incidentally, the planned advanced lesson for shapes covers solid geometric forms).

This type of serendipity seems to shadow many RTC-TH activities. When you see the layouts of the various Habitat gardens on campus, serendipity begins to go synergistic. The some of the circular and curvilinear garden beds seem to cry out to be mapped. Moving the students through the basics of mathematics and geometry in textbooks and class is the start. RTC-TH outdoor lesson modules include field mapping exercises, using a magnetic compass, map drawing, and other applications.

Connecting classroom lessons to real world activities and job related skills is all part of the RTC-TH community-based environmental education effort. All of this fits well with the current Thai education reform strategy of “teachers and students learning together.” So far, at Na Fa Elementary School, both the teachers and the students have shown themselves ready and willing to learn. That is truly a winning combination for a small rural village school and the community. ☺



*The RTC-TH donated funds that helped purchase new teaching aids, materials, and general supplies needed by students from disadvantaged families.*



*Making a campus map combines Habitat and math.*





## SEEDS FOR TOMORROW

“A picture is worth a thousand words.” So goes the old saying. And at Na Fa Elementary School, the words start the process of teachers and students building their English vocabulary.

In summer 2005, the RTC-TH staff taught Na Fa teachers in the basics of making PowerPoint presentations. The Winter 2007 volunteer effort resulted in 11 CDs of photos. The RTC-TH team gave a full set of photo CDs to Na Fa Elementary School for use in report writing and lesson development.

Sharing the data and information reveals the true power of the project. Empowerment includes not just the knowledge and skills. Providing the basic raw materials for new lessons are the seeds for future growth.

“We taught them the basics, and now we jump start the process with some raw materials. It’s now up to them to plant the seeds and nurture themselves to create new lessons of their own,” said Greg Lee. “The Internet gives us the capability to review and smooth the English for them. This global reach does require them to use more technology. It is available at the school. Now they have one more reason to use it.”

The RTC-TH staff also gave 12 ESSI T-shirts to the teachers to use as incentive awards for outstanding students in the REEEPP projects.

**[Note:** The RTC-TH began as a grassroots project under the Earth Systems Science, Inc. (ESSI) umbrella. ESSI was co-founded by Greg Lee. The RTC-TH became a wholly independent organization in 2005.)



A complete set of 11 RTC-TH photo CDs for the Winter 2007 REEEPP activities provides Na Fa teachers with a diverse array of pictures to use in developing more illustrated English stories about routine school activities. The RTC-TH trained the teachers to use PowerPoint during the summer 2005 volunteer project.



The Internet lets Na Fa teachers stay connected with RTC-TH staff.



Old stock of 12 ESSI T-shirts given to Na Fa Elementary School teachers as outstanding REEEPP student incentive.



## REEEPP 2007 NEWS UPDATE: January

Community-Based Environmental Education For The Self-Sufficiency And Sustainability Of Small Rural Family Farms

As a way of closing this REEEPP update report, we wanted to share an assortment of photos from Na Fa Elementary School. It is hard to put into words the magic that is taking place here as a result of the simple act of sharing from the RTC-TH volunteers to the students, teachers, and families of Ban Na Fa, Thailand.

### More Photos



*Students practicing English names of fruits and vegetables.*



*"Chutes and Ladders" still popular after the volunteers left.*



*Grade 4 students eagerly writing the lyrics to a Mason Williams song "Isn't Life Beautiful."*



*Students and teachers receive a RTC-TH Children's Day donation for books, materials, and supplies.*



*"Hello, teacher. Good to see you again!" Students got braver and used more English now than in 2005.*



*Girl Guide and Boy Scout activities are ideal for future RTC-TH outdoor environmental lessons.*

