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The Dek Noi Pattana Foundation and
Early Childhood Development in Thailand:
Strategy and Work Program 2018-19

Introduction

The Dek Noi Pattana (DNP) Foundation was established in November 2017 to support early childhood development (ECD) in Thailand. The Foundation believes that all Thai children should benefit from a high quality ECD program and that realizing such a vision is critical to Thailand moving from a middle to a high-income country.

International experience confirms that ECD programs can be enormously helpful in enhancing children's physical, intellectual, social and emotional skills and generally have returns that far exceed the returns to other development ventures, including investments in other levels of education. Thailand already has many of the ingredients for high-quality ECD programs: development centers for children aged between 2 and 4 and run by local authorities are in operation throughout the country; children are reasonably well nourished and eager to learn; parents, grandparents, communities and local authorities are supportive; and financial resources are available. But in many parts of the country teachers and caretakers have yet to receive the kind of training and support that would enable them to provide high-quality ECD programs.

It is in this context that the primary focus of the DNP Foundation's work is to help enhance the training and support provided to ECD teachers and caretakers, mobilize the support of parents and local government officials, and help the development centers become high-quality early learning centers. It is doing so by building on a pilot project for training, coaching and mentoring teachers in high-quality ECD that was implemented in Surin and showed excellent results. The Foundation is also endeavoring to increase national awareness of the value of high quality ECD programs.

Accordingly, this report focuses first on the design, implementation and results of the pilot project in Surin. It then outlines how the Foundation is organized and managed before describing the Foundation's objectives and work program 2018-19 as well as its technical and financial resources. It concludes with a brief discussion about the importance of ECD for Thailand's future development.

Pilot Project in Surin: Design, Implementation and Results

The pilot project for ECD in Surin was implemented in three phases from June 2014 to March 2018. The project started with supporting one learning center in the Donraed sub-district of Surin province (one of the poorest sub-districts in the province). It continued in a second phase by supporting all six centers in the same sub-district. In its third phase it supported seventeen centers/classes in Surin including the six centers in Donraed, four centers in the Salakdai sub-district, three centers in the Nong Ruea sub-district and four classes in the Thatum municipality. All the centers/classes are run by the Tambon/Municipal Administrations and the Department of Local Administration (DLA) and cater to children aged 2-4 years.

The pilot project had three key objectives: first, training, coaching and mentoring teachers/caretakers to effectively implement a high-quality ECD program that excites and empowers the children; second, ensuring that the program helps develop the skills (physical, intellectual, emotional and social) of all children in an integrated manner; and third, contributing to the sustainability of the program by working with all stakeholders (teachers,

parents, education committees, and tambon and provincial officials) to enhance their effectiveness in monitoring and managing the centers.

The project built on the Basic Education Curriculum issued by the Ministry of Education (see Annex 1) and focused on three components in particular¹:

1. Providing all teachers and caretakers with a solid foundation of the physical, cognitive, emotional and social development of children aged 2-4 with training in twelve different modules:
 - writing lesson plans
 - designing learning activities
 - morning and outdoor activities
 - music and movement activities
 - extra-curricular activities
 - arts and crafts activities
 - fundamentals of free-play
 - educational games
 - language skills development
 - discipline in early childhood
 - helping slow-learning children and children with learning disabilities
 - working with parents and parent organizations

2. Supporting teachers and caretakers in lesson plan and learning materials development and implementation, including: guidance on the overall learning environment; adjusting and harmonizing learning plans; preparing a master copy of learning materials; training teachers/caretakers to draft comprehensive lesson plans and produce appropriate learning materials for each week; and working with teachers/caretakers to systematically implement the lesson plans and use the learning materials they created

3. Working closely with the local authorities, the education committees and the teachers/caretakers to build a stronger performance monitoring and evaluation system including: regular monitoring of children's progress and development milestones using the national quality standards in the four key skill areas; discussing the results of the assessments with teachers/caretakers and determining what changes should be made (e.g. in lesson plans, support for particular children etc.); and discussing the results of the assessments with provincial and local authorities and education committees, thus enhancing their capacity to effectively monitor and support the teachers, caretakers, and centers.

¹ The project and now the Foundation's overall approach to ECD has much in common with other approaches (such as High Scope, Montessori, Waldorf and Reggio Emilia) that are part of a progressive movement in education. While there are differences between each of these approaches, there are many similarities including an emphasis on experiential learning through the five senses, empowering learners, integrated curricula, personalized collaborative learning, critical thinking, problem solving, learning through play, and connecting learners with their surroundings and community.

In addition, the project worked with the local authorities and other concerned stakeholders to determine what improvements were needed in the physical environment of the centers to ensure the safety of the children and a good overall learning environment. This included helping make an initial assessment of conditions and needs, prepare renovation plans, and monitor implementation of the plans. The project also provided guidance on the purchase of education materials and other expenditures by the local authorities.

Results: In its *first phase* the pilot project achieved excellent results in the Watchaisrisa-ard Center, Donraed, as measured by the performance of the children². Indeed, the children's physical, emotional, social and intellectual skills all increased enormously. More specifically, in the nine-month period from July 2014 to March 2015 the percentage of children in the center that were able to perform skills independently rose from 1% to 60% for physical skills; from 8% to 87% for emotional skills; from 10% to 87% for social skills; and from 2% to 47% for intellectual skills. Moreover, in all four dimensions the children were generally far ahead of the children at a nearby learning center where there was no similar intervention (the control group). For example, for the January-March 2015 period as a whole, the percentage of children that could perform skills independently was somewhat higher at the Watchaisrisa-ard Center compared with the nearby center for physical skills (58% compared with 46%) and very much higher for all the other skills: 68% compared with 26% for emotional skills; 70% compared with 29% for social skills; and 41% compared with 16% for intellectual skills.

In its *second phase* the pilot project continued to achieve excellent results³. Between June 2016 and February 2017 across the six centers in Tambon Donraed, the percentage of children able to perform key skills independently rose from 8% to 67% for physical skills; from 3% to 56% for emotional skills; from 8% to 52% for social skills; and from 5% to 42% for intellectual skills. Moreover, all of these results were much above the comparable results for the control group. There were, however, substantial variations in results across the six centers. The Wathchaisrisa-ard Center (where the pilot project started) performed even better in the second phase than in the first phase of the project despite less technical support. This is most encouraging because it suggests that with an appropriate level of monitoring and support, excellent results can be sustained. At the other end of the spectrum, one or two centers achieved results only a little above that of the control group, a reflection in part of the variation in interest and commitment of the teachers and caretakers, and strongly suggesting there is scope for further improvement.

The *third and final phase* of the pilot project was completed in March 2018 and showed continued excellent results overall⁴. At the time of the mid-year review it was already clear that the children were rapidly improving their skills across all four dimensions. It was encouraging to note that the teachers themselves were excited by the progress the children were making; and though the project requires a lot of hard work in the beginning, the workload is

² See report entitled "Progress Report on Early Childhood Development Project, Watchaisrisa-Ard Early Learning Center, Donraed Sub-district, Rattanaaburi District, Surin Province, 2015" for a more detailed discussion of the results of the first phase of the pilot project.

³ See separate report entitled "Donraed Early Childhood Development Project Progress Report 2016-2017" for a more detailed discussion of the results of the second phase of the pilot project.

⁴ See separate report entitled "Surin Early Childhood Development Project Progress Report 2017-18" for a more detailed discussion of the results of this final phase of the pilot project.

reduced once the system is in place. These encouraging impressions were confirmed by the final results of the pilot project. Over the course of the year across the seventeen centers/classes, the proportion of children unable to perform key skills fell dramatically and the proportion of children able to perform key skills independently rose substantially (from 14% to 66% for physical skills; from 1% to 64% for emotional skills; from 3% to 62% for social skills; and from 1% to 56% for intellectual skills). It should also be noted that across all four dimensions and for the seventeen centers/classes in total, the results achieved by the end of the year were much above those for the control group used in the first phase of the project.

Underlying the very good overall results, however, were substantial variations in results across the centers/classes – a continuation of the same pattern observed during the second phase. On the positive side, the Watchaisrisa-ard Center did even better in the third phase than in the second and first phases. Also most impressive and matching the performance of the Watchaisrisa-ard Center was the performance of one of the centers in Salakdai and the four classes in Thatum. The performance of other centers improved but not as impressively. As part of an independent evaluation of the pilot project, the Foundation is reviewing in more detail the likely causes of these variations, and what can be done to address them.

The pilot project was managed by a project team led by an outstanding Thai pre-school education specialist with support from project assistants (some with expertise in pre-school education and others with expertise in community development), and a project advisor based in Bangkok. In addition, a management team for the project (including experts in both education and finance) visited the project on a regular basis to review progress and provide guidance to the team. The management team also interacted with tambon/municipal and provincial officials, as well as all other interested stakeholders. Expenditures on the project from its inception in mid-2014 through its completion in March 2018 totaled 5.3 million baht and were financed by two generous donations from CH. Karnchang Public Company Limited (each donation totaled 2 million baht), as well as by individual donations.

The Foundation: Organization and Management

To build on and scale up the success of the pilot project, its organizers⁵ decided to set up a foundation – the Dek Noi Pattana Foundation - which was formally established in November 2017. In addition to scaling up the Surin initiative, the Foundation is endeavoring to increase national awareness of the value of high-quality ECD programs.

The Board of Directors of the Foundation includes:

- Khun Ian Porter, Chair (former Country Director, World Bank)
- Khun Omporn Lulitananda Regel, Vice-Chair (former Senior Education Specialist, World Bank)
- Khunying Kasama Varavarn, Senior Member (former Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education)

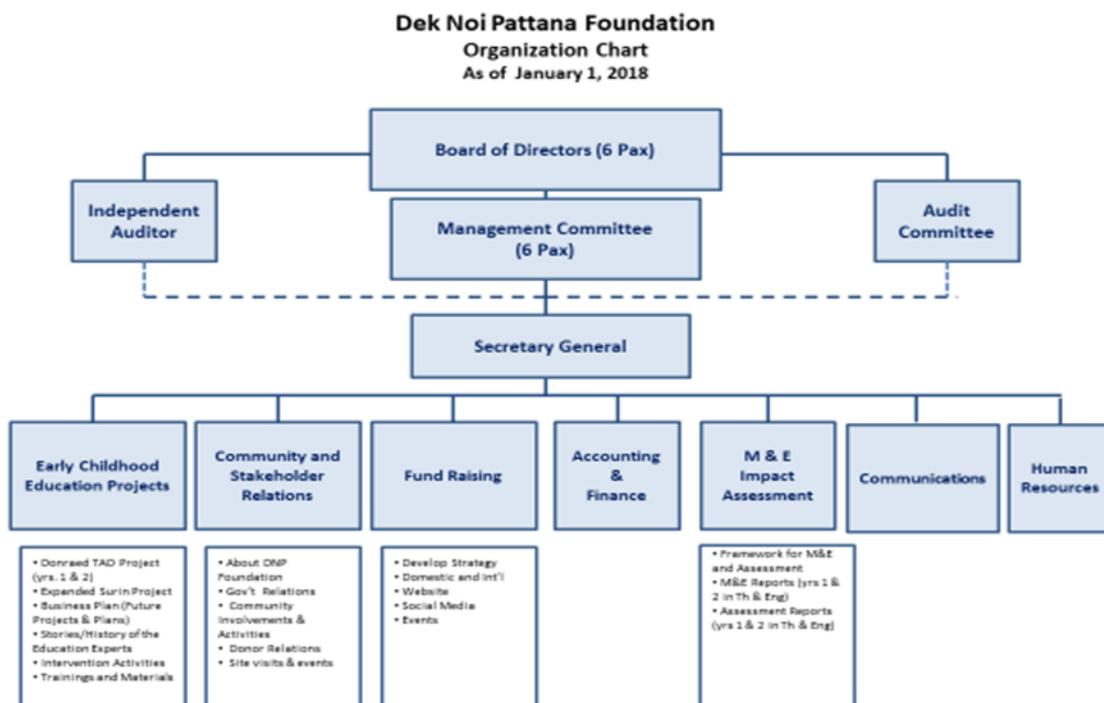
⁵ The Board and Management of the Foundation would like to acknowledge the critical contributions made to the pilot project by Khun Supakit Simuan (physical exercise and yoga trainer, resident of Donraed and the originator of the project) and Khun Nitaya Chatnantawej (financial management specialist at the World Bank who has provided invaluable financial and administrative management expertise to the project).

- Khun Aswin Kongsiri, Senior Member (currently Chairman of the Board, CH. Karnchang Public Company Limited)
- Khun Tanatat Puttasuwan, Treasurer (currently Consultant on Financial Management)
- Khun Pamornrat Tansanguanwong, Secretary (currently Senior Social Development Specialist, World Bank).

The Board of Directors has also benefited from the support of a group of senior advisors, including Khun Kiatchai Sophastienphong, former Vice Minister of Finance, and Dr. Juree Vichit-Vadakan, Advisor to the National Institute of Development Administration and a Member of the Constitution Drafting Committee.

The Foundation’s Management Committee is led by Khun Ian Porter and includes Khun Omporn Lulitananda Regel, Khun Tanatat Puttasuwan, and Khun Pamornrat Tansanguanwong as well as Khun Jenjira Meerasri (pre-school education specialist and the Foundation’s Chief Technical Expert) and Khun Anuje Sirikit (formerly with UNESCO and the Foundation’s Operations Manager). All the members of the Board and all the members of the Management Committee, except the Chief Technical Expert and the Operations Manager, work for the Foundation on a volunteer basis.

The Management Committee oversees the work of the Foundation including the development and implementation of ECD projects to be supported by the Foundation, stakeholder relations, fund raising, accounting and finance, monitoring and evaluation, communications, and human resources (see organization chart).



Khun Jenjira Meerasri as the Foundations’ Chief Technical Expert manages the development and implementation of specific ECD projects – and works closely with the other members of the Management Committee. Khun Jenjira works with a team of project assistants as well as

advisors and other teachers working on a part-time basis, including Khun Phithayaphorn Singhakantaphong (Assistant Professor, Faculty of Education, Rajabhat Suan Dusit University) and Khun Kanoung Saikaew (who recently retired from her position as Assistant Professor, Surindra Rajabhat University) and teachers from the New International School of Thailand (NIST).

Khun Anuje Sirikit as the Foundation's Operations Manager is involved in stakeholder relations, fund raising, accounting and finance, human resources, and communications – and also works closely with other members of the Management Committee, including with Khun Tanatat Puttasuwan on accounting and finance and Khun Pamornrat Tansanguanwong on stakeholder relations and communications. Khun Anuje is supported by other experts and assistants working on a part-time basis, including accounting and auditing specialists.

The Foundation: Vision, Mission and Values

The Foundation's vision, mission and values are as follows:

Vision: All Thai children benefit from a high-quality early childhood development (ECD) program.

Mission:

- Improve the quality of 19,000 locally funded ECD centers through engaging key partners in promoting innovative and sustainable teacher training programs that focus on children's empowerment
- Work with key stakeholders to increase public awareness of the critical importance of ECD

Values:

- Professional excellence
- Innovative thinking
- Trust and partnership
- Transparency and accountability
- Open communications and teamwork
- Deep respect for local context and customs

Objectives and Work Program for 2018-19

For 2018-19, the Foundation has set itself the following objectives:

- a) Expand and sustain project activities in Surin, drawing on the lessons learned from the pilot project;
- b) Initiate projects in other provinces; and
- c) Engage with the National Economic and Social Development Council, the Department of Local Administration (DLA) and other partners (private and public) in support of high-quality ECD across the nation's 19,000 centers.

a) Expand and Sustain Project Activities in Surin

The project has piloted an approach to the training of teachers and caretakers that has proven its worth by its impact on the children and their skills development. The challenge now is to roll it out to other tambons/municipalities and centers in Surin as quickly as possible, while maintaining quality both in the centers that have already benefited from the project and for the new ones. In this regard the following lessons have been learned from the three phases of the pilot:

1. Strong leadership by tambon officials and their commitment to introducing high quality ECD programs in their tambons is critical to the overall success of the project.
2. The package of teaching materials for the twelve modules, as well as the package of lesson plans and learning materials is now well developed and “fit for purpose” after being fine-tuned over the course of the pilot. Only small modifications will be needed from year to year in recognition of differing circumstances in particular tambons and development centers.
3. The approach to the twice-yearly intensive teacher training programs is also now well developed and has proven its worth, as has the measurement system for monitoring the children’s physical, emotional, social and intellectual skills. Any needed modifications will be made based on a review of experience to date.
4. The core project team (the Foundation’s Chief Technical Expert plus assistants) can now count on receiving valuable support both from the teachers that are already well trained and experienced in the approach, as well as from outside advisors and teachers. In addition, the team is using mechanisms such as Line (a closed internet social media platform) to respond to questions, exchange experiences etc. All of this greatly reduces the amount of time the project team needs to spend at each center.
5. The engagement, understanding and active support of the education committees and local authorities throughout the year is critical, both to achieving desired results (especially in cases where there may be issues concerning the commitment of the teachers and caretakers) and to ensuring the sustainability of those results.

The Foundation is also endeavoring to deepen its understanding of the lessons to be learned from the three phases of the pilot project, building on the assessment of the good overall results achieved as set out above and further detailed in separate progress reports. In this regard, three specific activities have been undertaken.

First, Foundation experts have summarized the experience with the design and implementation of the training, coaching and mentoring activities relating to the Basic Education Curriculum issued by the Ministry of Education, including opportunities for improvement. This summary is now being shared with members of the Faculty of Education of Surindra Rajabhat University (SRU) for their review and advice.

Second, the Foundation engaged an experienced consultant in education monitoring and evaluation to review the system being used to monitor the development of the children’s skills and to recommend improvements as well as options for integrating it into the regular monitoring and evaluation processes of local and provincial authorities.

The consultant's recommendations are now being reflected in revisions to the monitoring system for the 2019/20 school year.

Third, the Foundation commissioned an independent assessment of lessons learned from the pilot project with a particular focus on how to better engage with parents, education committees, local authorities, and teachers in the design and implementation of project activities. This assessment (which was carried out by an organization with expertise in community engagement) has now been completed and its findings will be reflected in the 2019/20 work program.

The experience of the pilot project and lessons learned were further discussed with provincial and tambon/municipal officials, and an overall understanding was reached on the plan for the 2018/19 school year and beyond. In particular, the provincial authorities requested the Foundation to build on the success of the pilot project by maintaining the same project objectives and components, and by moving towards the development of model centers in each of the province's seventeen districts. They in turn, can support the rolling out of high-quality ECD programs to the other centers in each district. In this regard the Foundation has focused on the following during the 2018-19 school year:

1. Ensuring that centers already at or close to being model centers maintain, and even enhance, the quality of their work in the coming year. Centers in this category include the Watchaisrisa-ard center in Donraed (where the project first started and which can act as a model center for others in Rattanaaburi District); one center in Salakdai (which can act as a model center for others in Mueng Surin); and the four classes in the school in Thathum municipality (which can act as model classes for other centers in Thathum district).
2. Working on a demand-driven basis with provincial, district and tambon officials, teachers/caretakers and other stakeholders in the other centers that have received support from the Foundation, to enhance the effectiveness of project implementation and bring them closer to the performance of the model centers.
3. Discussing with other tambons/districts the potential for developing model centers for their respective districts and how best to go about doing this. In this regard, discussions are well advanced with Sangkha municipality in Sangkha district (where a memorandum of understanding (MOU) has recently been signed) and are on-going with Tambon Nong Sa Rit in Chomprah district, and Tambon Sakud in Chumphol Buri district.

In determining the specifics of the further roll-out both in Surin and other provinces (see below) that have requested support, the Foundation is using the following *selection criteria* that are based on experience and lessons learned to date.

First, there needs to be a clear commitment on the part of responsible government entities and personnel to collaborate with the Foundation in enhancing the quality of ECD in their areas of jurisdiction. This should include a commitment to have in-post an education officer who will spend a significant amount of his/her time working with Foundation staff in monitoring and evaluating the teaching and learning process under the project.

Second, teachers and caretakers must be able to attend the five-day training courses held in April and October; and the centers must be closed, or other arrangements made, during these time periods to allow the teachers and caretakers to be trained.

Third, teachers and caretakers must be able to modify the learning environment and change learning schedules and daily activities consistent with the Basic Education Core Curriculum and the Foundation's approach to implementing this Curriculum.

Fourth, teachers and caretakers must demonstrate their interest and commitment to working with Foundation experts to improve the quality of their teaching and effectively monitor and evaluate children's progress.

In order to respond to the request of provincial authorities concerning the development of model centers in all the districts in the province, and to help ensure the sustainability of project activities, the Foundation has signed a MOU with the Faculty of Education, SRU. In this regard the Foundation and SRU have agreed to work together in "enhancing the quality of ECD programs in the development centers run by the local authorities". This will include supporting the further strengthening of the Faculty of Education's own ECD center, increasing the extent and quality of in-service training currently provided to teachers and caretakers, and developing mechanisms for enhancing the extent and quality of coaching and mentoring options for teachers and caretakers. Members of the Faculty of Education and Foundation are now firming up joint activities for the 2019/20 school year.

The Foundation's Management Committee continues to work closely with officials in Surin on the above-mentioned activities, and in that context determine the type and level of resources needed for project implementation.

b) Initiate Projects in Other Provinces

The Foundation has been asked by local authorities and development centers in other provinces, as well as by potential sponsors, to consider initiating projects in areas other than Surin. The Foundation believes that it currently has the technical capacity to expand to two other provinces in 2019/20, in addition to its planned expansion in Surin. In each of the additional provinces to be supported by the Foundation, the criteria for selecting centers as well as the overall approach and type of project components are expected to remain the same as in Surin and will draw on the lessons learned from the Foundation's experience there. But the specifics of what is needed under each component will vary depending both on the existing conditions in the centers and the existing capacity and commitment of local stakeholders.

Discussions are most advanced with local government officials, teachers and parents responsible for four centers in Roi Et. Teachers and caretakers from these centers, as well as responsible education officials, have participated in the bi-annual training sessions held in Surin, and a detailed program of support for 2019/20 has been prepared. The program follows the already proven arrangements in Surin, but with modifications based on the Surin experience and taking into account the specific circumstances of the centers in Roi Et. It includes periodic visits by the Foundation's Chief Technical Expert and her team, and regular interaction between the centers and the Foundation team through Line and other forms of social media.

Local government officials and interested organizations in both the private and NGO sectors have also proposed that the Foundation extend its activities to other centers and provinces, including Buri Ram, Lop Buri, Khon Kaen, Krabi and Prachinburi. The Foundation's

management team will follow up on these and other such proposals in the coming months with a view to the possible expansion of the Foundation's activities into other provinces in 2020 and beyond.

c) Work with NESDC, DLA and Other Partners

Members of the Foundation's Board and Management Committee have had very valuable discussions with Dr Suttipong Juljarern, Director-General, DLA and Khun Tawee Sempukdeekul, Deputy Director-General, as well as with officials of the Division of Local Education Development, DLA, on opportunities for collaboration. With the formal establishment of the Foundation, it is expected that these discussions will lead to a partnership between the Division/Department and the Foundation for mutual collaboration in two important areas. First, the Division and the Foundation are interested in working together to deepen understanding of the performance and impact of the ECD projects being supported by the Foundation, and to share that experience more widely within government, as well as with other partners that are implementing similar projects and programs. Second, the Division and Foundation are interested in working together and with other partners (such as UNICEF) to enhance the awareness and understanding of the public at large about the importance of ECD and the kinds of high-quality intervention that can produce great results for their children. The Foundation has also been requested by the National Economic and Social Development Council (NESDC) to support it in the preparation of a policy brief on ECD.

Technical and Financial Resources

Technical resources: The Foundation's Chief Technical Expert is taking the lead in managing the further expansion of the Foundation's project activities in Surin, as well as the roll-out of such activities to Roi Et and potentially other provinces. She is supported by a team of project assistants and other advisors.

As noted above the Foundation has also signed a MOU with SRU which will help enhance the Foundation's technical capacity very significantly. In addition, the Foundation has reached an understanding with NIST under which NIST teachers will provide coaching and mentoring support to teachers/caretakers in Surin. During the upcoming school year SRU and NIST will focus their work on centers that have already benefited from the pilot project including both the centers that are expected to serve as the model centers for others in the same district as well as those centers that still require support to bring them up to model center status. In this regard, Assistant Professor Kanoung Saikaew (who has recently joined the Foundation as a project advisor) will play a key role in coordinating with SRU and NIST, particularly in enhancing teachers and caretakers capacity through a range of coaching and mentoring mechanisms. It is also expected that SRU, NIST and Assistant Professor Kanoung will work closely with Peuankrabuankorn (Friends of Facilitator) – the organization that undertook the independent assessment of lessons learned – in enhancing the engagement of all concerned stakeholders.

The Foundation's Operations Manager is responsible for the overall management of the other main activity of the Foundation – namely support for the Education Division of DLA in increasing national awareness of the importance of ECD – in addition to her more administrative responsibilities. To increase national awareness and support the Foundation's

overall work program, the Foundation intends to pay particular attention to external communications, beginning with the creation of a high-quality website.

Financial resources: Expenditures by the Foundation during 2018 on training, coaching, mentoring, monitoring, and other project and administrative activities totaled THB 2.7 million. Expenditures are estimated to increase to around THB 3.5 million in 2019 as a result of the Foundation's engagement with SRU and the expansion of its activities into Roi Et. Both the expenditures for 2018 and the estimated expenditures for 2019 take into account that on a per-center basis, costs fell over the three phases of the pilot project and are now estimated at around 250,000 baht per center for the first year's investment, followed by around 75,000 baht per center per year for one to two years, for monitoring support to ensure sustainability. It should also be noted that the expenditures by the Foundation are small relative to the expenditures by local authorities, which spend on average at least one million baht per center per year.

With respect to financing, during 2018 the Foundation remained almost entirely dependent on the generous financial support of the CH. Karnchang Public Company, supplemented by contributions from individuals. However, during the course of the year significant progress was made in arranging additional financial support. The Premier Group provided support for the independent evaluation of the pilot project and has indicated its interest in providing further support to implement the evaluation's recommendations. The John F. Kennedy Foundation of Thailand has provided financial support for the MOU with SRU which is very important in mobilizing additional technical resources for the Foundation's continued work in Surin, as well as freeing up the time of the core team for work on the expansion into other provinces. In addition, BETAGRO has agreed to provide financial as well as technical support for the roll-out of project activities in Roi Et and CH. Karnchang has recently approved further funding for the Foundation in 2019. With these commitments secured, there will still be a funding gap in 2019/20 which the Foundation expects to fill through donations from other organizations and individuals.

Concluding Remarks: Importance of ECD for Thailand's Future Development

Achieving Thailand 4.0, and the move from a middle to a high-income country depends on major improvements in education, including ensuring that all Thai children benefit from a high-quality ECD program. The Foundation strongly believes that the pilot project undertaken in Surin has provided a valuable demonstration of how this can be accomplished at a very low incremental cost and be sustained in the medium and longer term. The Foundation is, therefore, committed to working with local governments and with other partners in scaling up this initiative in Surin and other provinces, and in increasing national awareness of the importance of ECD. Let's seize this great opportunity together!

DEK NOI PATTANA (DNP) FOUNDATION'S TEACHING METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

BACKGROUND

In 2001, the Ministry of Education issued the Basic Education Core Curriculum to serve as the core nation-wide curriculum at the basic level, including the pre-school level. The 2001 curriculum provided a framework and orientation for enhancing the quality of education, with prescribed goals and learning standards. The curriculum also harmonized the objectives of the National Education Act 1999 which placed emphasis on decentralization, giving more authority to local communities and schools, with the aim of encouraging local communities to play a greater role in preparing curricula to serve local needs.

In 2008, the Basic Education Core Curriculum was updated but it continues to provide local communities and schools with a framework for preparing more detailed school curricula. Teaching-learning activities organized for all Thai children at the basic education level are aimed at enhancing the knowledge and skills that learners require for their lives in an ever-changing society and empowering them to seek more knowledge for continuous lifelong learning and self-development. The learning standards and indicators prescribed in the Basic Core Curriculum also enable agencies concerned at all levels to clearly measure expected learning outcomes throughout the pre-school years.

METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

Improving the quality of early childhood teachers and caretakers is at the heart of the DNP Foundation's approach. Strong focus is placed on strengthening their performance to effectively support the Core Curriculum mentioned above, specifically drawing upon the "Two Dee" education philosophy which focuses on the need to guide children through various stages of social, emotional, physical, and intellectual development. The expectation is to produce "good students and good citizens".

Children are provided with a stimulating learning environment to help them to reach their full potential. Classroom activities are designed to promote social skills developments, emotional growth, physical coordination, as well as cognitive preparation. In addition, the approach takes into account international best practices/experiences/lessons learned as well as blending in the uniqueness of the Surin local/cultural context. Furthermore, it aims at providing fun-filled activities that stimulate learning and promote empowerment. Through daily activities, subject areas are inter-woven and repeated by using songs, nursery rhymes, riddles and stories as a medium for cognitive skills development (executive functions) to reinforce positive discipline. These activities are designed to be interconnected, fun, and at the same time help children learn about hygiene, self-control and responsibility.

The Foundation's approach has much in common with other approaches (such as Highscope, Montessori, Waldorf and Reggio Emilia) that are part of a progressive movement in education. While there are differences between each of these approaches, there are many similarities including an emphasis on experiential learning through the five senses, empowering learners,

integrated curricula, personalized collaborative learning, critical thinking, problem solving, learning through play, and connecting learners with their surroundings and community.

To support teachers/caretakers and the local authorities to effectively implement the above general Core Curriculum guidelines set by the Ministry of Education, the DNP Foundation's approach focuses on three core elements:

- ***Intensive in-service teacher training, followed by in-center support through coaching and mentoring***
- ***Lesson plan development and implementation***
- ***Regular monitoring of children's progress***

The approach focuses on:

- an enhanced learning and developmental process for 2-4 year old children;
- providing a safe and nurturing learning environment and activities;
- adhering to the child-centered learning principle, and taking into account individual differences;
- instilling local cultural appreciation;
- development of self-discipline, independence and responsibility,
- development of children's holistic skills through play and age- appropriate activities; and
- creating an experience from which children can learn to carry out daily tasks on their own, with some adult supervision

TEACHER TRAINING AND SUPPORT

Teacher training and support is critical to effective implementation of the above-mentioned approach. In this regard, two steps are followed:

Intensive In-service Teacher Training: Teachers and caretakers attend intensive training sessions provided by the DNP Foundation's early childhood development specialist team to gain better understanding of how to effectively teach 2-4 year old children, combining: child psychology; music; literature; hands-on classroom teaching practice; and close guidance and monitoring by the specialist team. Guest lecturers/experts are invited to share new thinking and approaches during the training. The 5-day training takes place twice a year in April and October.

During the training, a lesson plan for the year is jointly prepared by teachers and caretakers from participating centers and how to prepare weekly lesson plans are also taught. Team work is core to successful training and the work load is shared amongst members during the training. Once back at their respective centers, consultation and knowledge sharing continue to take place through "Line" and other social media.

In-Center Support: Coaching and mentoring is critical to the success of the DNP Foundation approach. Under the guidance of the specialist team, teachers and caretakers continue to receive technical support throughout the year on all key areas covered during the training. The specialist team also provides detail advice on the physical layout, organization of the center and procurement of relevant learning

materials since these are critical for effective teaching and learning. The team also provides guidance to teachers and caretakers on how to promote closer collaboration with families and communities to ensure local accountability and long-term sustainability.

LESSON PLAN DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

Effective implementation of the project team’s overall approach is highly dependent on the development and implementation of good lesson plans and the use of appropriate learning materials. This is the main focus of the intensive teacher training as well as the in-center support provided throughout the year. The lesson plans follow the daily schedule of the centers which includes the following broad sets of activities (see attachment 1 for a sample daily center schedule).

Morning greeting

Children are greeted and receive hugs from their teachers when they arrive at the centers. This physical contact not only makes the child feel welcome but also allows the teacher to know the child's body temperature. If the body temperature is found to be above average, the teacher can then inform the parents to bring the child to see a doctor or let the child rest at home until he/she is well again.

Where do things belong?

To promote the development of the children’s memory, focus and attention, after receiving the morning greeting, the children take off their shoes and put them neatly at designated area. They then store their personal belongings, such as bag packs, in assigned area.

Milk Pouring

After putting away their belongings, the children move on to pour milk in their own glasses. This activity teaches children to be responsible. Through this activity, they also learn basic mathematics and science skills while pouring the milk through weight and volume measurement. It is also an opportunity for the children to learn problem solving by adjusting the angle of the milk jug to the best position.

Morning Play Time

After completing their duties, children will have free time to play in the playground, sand box, and water corner before assembly. This is a fun time for the children. They also learn social skills and how to interact/share with other children. It helps the children develop inhibitory control and also shift/cognitive flexibility skills.

Assembly

At 08.30 am, the teacher turns on the song “The train is here” as a signal to let the children line up instead of giving instruction. At this time, the children practice emotional control and stop their play. They line up to sing the national anthem and pray.

Physical Education

Research supports the relationship between physical education programs and the development of social skills, academic performance, and increased attendance. The DNP Foundation fully recognizes the important correlation between physical activities and developing the whole child; therefore, children are engaged in a total of 30 minutes song and dance activity each day. The 30 minutes of structured physical activity is led by the teachers and the caretakers on the center's playground and/or inside their school building. Physical activity helps develop children's large muscle groups and trains them to love to exercise by playing games with set rules.



On rainy days, children are engaged in structured indoor physical activities with classmates. On sunny bright days, they are engaged in structured outdoor physical activities. These activities range from whole group activities to small group activities.

Activities to promote hygiene

Maintaining personal hygiene is of utmost importance for children and needs to be approached with the right teaching tools and methods. Personal hygiene is much more than just keeping your hands clean. It is also about keeping your entire body clean and not infecting others around you. Children get in touch with dirt, dust, and bacteria when they are outside. Whether they go to the school or any other places, they touch things that have bacteria, which get transferred to their hands. When the bacteria find their way into a child's body, he/she is prone to diseases and illnesses.



Good personal hygiene habits enable children to: a) stay healthy and free from illnesses and diseases; b) feel good about themselves and able to maintain and enjoy a healthy body image – people with poor personal hygiene have a negative body image which can disrupt their social life; and c) develop a healthy personality – being clean, well-dressed and well-represented boosts one's self-image, which in turn increases their confidence and their chances of success in their professional as well as their social lives.

Children do not have the knowledge or skills to take care of their personal hygiene. Therefore, parents and schools need to oversee their habits. The best way to teach children about hygiene is to start early, with simple practices at home and school.

Snack

After the outdoor activity, the teacher turns on the song “Let’s wash our hands”. The children are offered a nutritious snack (normally a box of milk and a bananas) each morning and take turns sitting at the table and helping themselves to the snack. Children follow the routine of removing the food covers, placing them in the proper place and passing both milk and bananas to each other at the assigned tables. In carrying out this activity, children learn inhibitory control and how to wait for their turn to receive their snack that is passed along in a specific order. They are also responsible for cleaning their own cups after they finish drinking.



Activities to promote songs and rhythm

Singing nursery rhymes and songs to children can help develop their language and communication skills from an early age. There are many different ways of making this type of learning fun, through the use of props, music or musical instruments. Creating a fun learning experience for children will help engage them and they are more likely to sit and participate.



Singing nursery rhymes can also help develop children’s social skills as it is an opportunity for children to get to know each other. Sitting next to one another and holding hands during the song is ideal for social skills development. Given the different pace of development amongst children, the use of nursery rhymes will help children’s communication and language development at various stages - older children may beginning to learn to the rhyme while younger ones are just beginning to learn new words.

Introducing children to a variety of nursery rhymes can help them understand and learn about different sounds. This is an important part of developing early literacy skills. Listening to different sounds and different nursery rhymes provides children with the foundations in helping them to read and write.

As nursery rhymes are fun and full of sounds, children will tune into these sounds. Older children will experiment in combining sounds and blend them together to form words.

Nursery rhymes and songs have a huge impact on children’s language and communication development. Children relish in listening to songs full of rhyming, rhythm and repetition. By singing songs containing these core elements, it helps boost children’s language, communications and literacy development. In addition, rhythmic activity is also included to develop children’s sense of rhythm and body control. In carrying out this activity, children need synchronize their body movements with the rhythm.

Activities to promote experience

Storytelling is one of the most important activities to promote experience. Storytelling forms a crucial part in developing a child's overall personality.

Children have an innate love of stories. Stories create magic and a sense of wonder at the world. Stories teach us about life, about ourselves and about others. Storytelling is a unique way for children to develop an understanding, respect and appreciation for other cultures, and can promote a positive attitude to people from different lands, races and religions.



Stories also:

- Promote a feeling of well-being and relaxation
- Increase children's willingness to communicate thoughts and feelings
- Encourage active participation
- Increase verbal proficiency
- Encourage use of imagination and creativity
- Encourage cooperation between children
- Enhance listening skills

Before telling a story, the teacher asks the children to solve a riddle to gain their interests and attention. Once finish with a riddle, the teacher then asks questions and the children answer about the contents of the story. To complete this session, the teacher sings a song that summarizes the main point of the story.

Independent activities

Independent activities allow children to use their creativity while developing their imagination, dexterity, and physical, cognitive, and emotional strength. Such activities are important to healthy brain development. It is through being engaged in independent activities that children at a very early age engage and interact in the world around them. Happy children love to learn. Forcing little children to sit at desks at this age does not promote learning. They need to be engaged in independent activities, as well as play, explore, use their motor skills, and learn how to work with others.



- *Educational games* promote observation, comparison, and analytic skills that are related to the story from the previous activity.
- *Arts* promote creative skills through art work that relates to the educational content learned each day. The children also develop initiative skills.
- *Free play* allows children to be free to choose what activity they want to do such as simulation game, building blocks, creative plastic, art, educational games, music, or reading books. These activities promote systematic planning and organizing skills.

Lunch

Lunch is a social event for children. It is a time for them to learn to be service minded by setting plates and utensils, proper hygiene through hand washing and the use of serving spoons, general dining etiquette and manners in a family setting. Lunch is provided by the center. Children of mixed ages are seated at assigned tables, with older children taking the responsibility of serving rice and other dishes to younger ones. Here, children learn how to serve and pass the food to friends and wait (inhibitory control) until everyone is served before eating. Cleaning up their own plates and utensils also allow children to learn to be responsible.



Clean up before nap time

This activity promotes general hygiene through washing their faces, hands, feet and brushing their teeth before taking an afternoon nap. It also includes changing into their napping clothes, making their beds and helping each other. Through these activities, children learn about kindness and service to others.

Quiet/Rest Time

After lunch, children brush their teeth and have about 2 hours to rest. This allows children to rejuvenate and prepare them to end their school day. During this time, the teacher is engaged in guiding group prayer and in comforting children while they rest.



Goodbye before going home

This activity happens after nap time and it encourages the children to say goodbye before going home. After their afternoon nap, the children neatly put away their beddings, wash their faces and comb their hair on their own.

MONITORING OF CHILDREN'S PROGRESS

The project undertakes regular monitoring of children's progress and development milestones. Children are assessed in four key skills, i.e. physical, emotional, social, and intellectual skills, using the national quality standards. A set of measurement questions (see attachment 2) are used during each assessment and are answered through both observation and the use of designed activities.

The assessments are undertaken systematically and rigorously by the project's pre-school education specialist together with the three project assistants and can take up to three days, depending on the size of the center and the number of children to be assessed. Ahead of the assessments the team meets to go over the questions and make sure there is a common understanding on the definition of each question and milestone. Each member of the team then assesses each child independently, and scores are averaged after discussing any significant differences in the initial scoring. In some cases, the questions can be answered based on

observations of the children during regular activities; in other cases, specific additional activities are included for the days when the assessment is being undertaken; and in yet other cases (e.g. questions such as helping each other or love of animals), the assessment may draw on the team's observation and knowledge of the children over a more extended time period.

Drawing on the results of the assessments, the project team works with the teachers and caretakers to make appropriate adjustments to the learning plans. The results for individual children are also reviewed with a view to determining what additional help and support particular children may need.

ANNEX 1, ATTACHMENT 1

Sample Center Schedule for Teachers, Caretakers and Maids

Review cleanliness and safety (7:00 a.m. -8:00 a.m.)

1. Open the center and the classroom
2. Prepare teaching/learning materials
3. Review the cleanliness and safety of the center
4. Review the cleanliness of the classroom, the toys, the dining area and the toilets
5. Review the cleanliness of the storage room, the playground, the sand box, the water activity area and the shoe racks
6. Review the cleanliness of the kitchen, the dining area and the hand washing area

Welcome children to the center and observe children's health, inspect playground equipment, sand box and water activity (8:00 a.m. – 8:20 a.m.)

1. Welcome parents and children and request parents to sign in (during the sign in period, teachers assess children's health – if a child has a temperature, the teacher is expected to request that the child be taken back home, get treatment and rest before returning to the center).
2. Ask children to remove their shoes and place them properly on the shoe racks
3. Ask children to put their bag packs on their assigned racks (Monday – put clean beddings and hand towels in assigned areas)
4. Ask children to pour milk into their own glasses.
5. Promote physical development by encouraging children to play in the playground, the sand box and the water activity
6. Supervise children to ensure safety while playing on the playground, in the sand box and the water activity.

Prepare children to clean up play equipment and to line up (8:20 a.m. - 8:30 a.m.)

1. Play “line up” song 2-3 times
2. National anthem
3. Morning prayer

Outdoor activities (8:30 a.m. -9:05 a.m.)

1. Physical exercise with music
2. Outdoor games / Thai traditional games
 - Introduce outdoor activities/ traditional games

Activities to promote proper hygiene (9:05 a.m. -9:15 a.m.)

1. Encourage children to clean off sand on their arms, legs and bodies
2. Encourage children to wash their feet and legs
3. Encourage children to get liquid hand soap from the “daily champion”

4. Encourage children to properly wash their hands by using the “hand washing” song to promote correct hand washing technique.
5. Remind children not to waste water and properly wipe their hands.
6. Supervise children to put on their bibs and sit quietly at their respective tables for milk to be served.

Morning Snack: Milk and bananas (milk drinking song) (9:15 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.)

1. The “table leader” removes food cover
2. The “deputy table leader” starts by passing out bananas and milk cups. Each child is expected to pass bananas and milk cups to other friends at the table.
3. The “table leader” tells members to start eating the bananas and drink the milk – table members say thank you.
4. Drink the milk and eat the bananas (children carefully peel the bananas without getting their hands dirty).
5. Children rinse their mouths.
6. Children rinse the milk cups, paying special attention to the rim area and carefully putting the cups away.
7. Children find their assigned seats with their symbols.

Activities to promote movement and rhythm (9:45 a.m. – 10:10 a.m.)

1. Read aloud the lyrics of the songs
2. Sing and tap
3. Sing, tap and other movements

Activities to promote experience (9:45 a.m. – 10:10 a.m.)

1. Riddles
2. Storytelling
3. Educational games
4. Rhymes
5. Educational games
6. Creative Arts
7. Demonstrate steps which need to be followed

Independent Activities (10:10 a.m. – 11:10 a.m. with music - independent play (song __))

1. Assemble floor foam puzzles - 4-6 children
2. Select toys - representatives select toys and explain the reason for the choice of toys selected
3. Select educational games – put down floor mat - 5 children
4. Select independent activities which include creative arts, educational games, read materials from related lesson or playing with play dough
5. Play with creative toys

Pick up toys/ hand washing/ bib (11:10 a.m. – 11:25 a.m.)

1. Turn on the “pick up toy” music– make sure children help each other pick up and put away the toys, the floor foam puzzle and activity tables.
2. “Selected leader of the day” helps the teachers dispense liquid hand soap to friends

3. Turn on the “hand washing” song
4. Observe children washing their hands
5. Children get liquid hand soap (ensure that the faucet is tuned on low, children not pressing on the faucet, tightly turn off the faucet and wipe their hands dry)
6. Children put on their bibs and sit that the assigned tables

Lunch (11:25 a.m. – 11:55 a.m.)

1. Turn on “lunch” song (song number 6)
2. Teacher or student representative announce the lunch menu and ask all the children to repeat after.
3. The “table leader” removes the food cover.
4. The “table leader” serves rice.
5. The “deputy table leader” serves other dishes to go with the rice
6. The child sitting next to the “deputy table leader” put spoons on individual plates. and passes the plates to all children seated at the table.
7. The “table leader” tells everyone to start lunch.
8. All the children at the table say thank you and start eating.
9. Teachers encourage children to eat appropriate amount of vegetable and meat.
10. If children need more food, the “table leader” serves more food. If the food on the table is not enough, the “table leader” puts up his/ her hand to ask the teachers to for more.

Clean up after lunch/brushing teeth/washing face and removing bibs (11:55 a.m. 12:20 pm)

1. Once children finish their food, they are expected to put their plates and utensils in the assigned areas.
2. Children drink the water, wash their mugs and put their mugs away.
3. Children brush their teeth, wash their faces and remove their bibs.
4. Teachers remind the children to use the toilet before taking the afternoon nap.
5. Children change into their napping outfits.

Lullaby for the afternoon nap (12: 20 p.m. – 14:20 p.m.)

1. Children take turn picking up their own beddings, with some support from the teachers when needed.
2. Turn on the lullaby (song number 12) until most of the children are asleep.

Put away the beddings/ change/ freshen up (14:20 p.m. – 14:35 p.m.)

1. Turn on the “get up” song 3-5 times to wake up the children and guide them to put their beddings away.
2. Oversee that the children are awake and properly put their beddings away.
3. Supervise children as they change their outfits.
4. Turn on the “face washing” song 3-5 times.
5. Comb children’s hair using individual comb, put talcum powder and guide them to sit down for milk.

Drink milk (snacks) and rinse mouth (14:35 p.m. – 14:55 p.m.)

1. Teacher or student representative announce the names of the snacks.
2. Children eat their afternoon snacks and the teachers ensure that they finish their snacks.

3. Children wash their mugs/ rise their mouths/ wipe their mouths and put their mugs in an assigned area.
4. Children return to the classroom and wait for their teachers.

Activities before going home (15:00 p.m.)

1. Turn on the “going home” song
2. Remind children to take their bag packs home. If it is Friday, teachers and caretakers remind children to take their hand towels, bibs and beddings home to be clean and to bring them back on Monday.
3. Parents or guardians sign their names before taking children home.
4. When majority of the children are picked up, teachers and caretakers need to
 - Carry out extra activities with the remaining children
 - Clean the dining area
 - Clean the classroom
 - Clean the toilets, the hand washing area and the kitchen

ANNEX 1, ATTACHMENT 2

Children's Physical, Emotional, Social and Intellectual Skills: Measurement Questions

Physical Development Skills
Healthy physical growth
1.1 Eating healthy food
1.2 Washing hands
1.3 Washing feet
1.4 Able to tell when one needs to go to the toilet
1.5 Behaving in a safety way
1.6 Interested in and having fun exercising
Gross and Fine Motor Skills
1.7 Climbing play ground equipment
1.8 Walking on a flat bar
1.9 Walking upstairs with hands assisted
1.10 Moving body with songs
1.11 Running and stopping
1.12 Jumping with two legs
1.13 Jumping with one leg
1.14 Throwing ball
1.15 Catching ball
1.16 Molding playdough into a long line, round shape, or round flat surface
1.17 Threading beads
1.18 Cutting paper with scissors
1.19 Stacking 5 blocks vertically
1.20 Drawing picture from imagination
Psychological Health
1.21 Cheerful and delightful with compliments and rewards
1.22 Expressing content upon successful completion of task

Emotional Development skills
Ethics
2.1 Helping and sharing with others when requested
2.2 Showing love to friends, animals, and environment
2.3 Putting toys back in place after use; taking care of his/her belongings
2.4 Patient and able to wait upon teacher's instruction
2.5 Completing tasks with some assistance
Appreciation of Arts and Musics
2.6 Participating in riddles and able to sing
2.7 Dancing along according to a demonstrated pattern

Social Development Skills

Self-Help

- 3.1 Telling own's name and surname as well as sex
- 3.2 Having a safety awareness
- 3.3 Ability to solve problems appropriately
- 3.4 Eating lunch without help
- 3.5 Cleaning his/her cup
- 3.6 Washing face and brushing teeth
- 3.7 Having a toilet skills
- 3.8 Putting shoes on

Loving of Nature, Environment, and Local Traditions

- 3.9 Do not destroy public goods and nature
- 3.10 Putting trash in the right place
- 3.11 Taking care of trees/plants
- 3.12 Paying respect to older people
- 3.13 Listening and speaking appropriately
- 3.14 Using kind words
- 3.15 Having appropriate eating etiquette

Living Happily and Hamoniously in Community

- 3.16 Participating in group activities
- 3.14 Respecting other people's rights
- 3.15 Leading and following skills
- 3.16 Giving and Taking
- 3.17 Respecting rules
- 3.18 Playing with friends

Intellectual Development Skills

Language Skills

4.1 Ability to communicate and response to questions

4.2 Writing lines or pictures to communicate feelings and demands

Critical thinking/Solving Problems

4.3 Telling relationship of objects within a group e.g. frog life cycle

4.4 Solving problems arising during play time

4.5 Classifying objects according to shapes and colors

4.6 Sorting at least 3 objects according to their position

4.7 Counting 1-10

4.8 Knowing the value of 1-3

4.9 Recognizing lesser and bigger values

4.10 Knowing positions (between in and out)

4.11 Knowing distance (between far and near)

4.12 Telling directions (between up-down; in-out)

4.13 Recognizing day and night

4.14 Telling at least 3 incidents chronologically

4.15 Ability to tell seasons with teacher's assistance

Imagination and Creativity

4.16 Participating in creative arts activities

4.17 Producing art pieces

4.18 Playing a musical instrument to create rhythm

4.19 Telling relationship between two different objects, e.g. doctor and stethoscope

4.20 Telling short stories

4.21 Drawing pictures to communicate problems

Good learning attitude and skills

4.22 Listening to short stories with pictures and able to name key characters

4.23 Listening and following instructions

4.24 Talking about short stories

4.25 Communicating his/her own needs, e.g. hungry, head ache

4.26 Able to name body parts and surrounding objects

4.27 Recognizing riddles and songs

4.28 Recognizing pictures

4.29 Opening and reading books

4.30 Writing freely (showing ability to control fine motor skills)