

Innovative kindergarten holds open day

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Ange Dries-Behrenbeck and her tiny tots. Photograph: supplied
Siem Reap's innovative kindergarten Children's Dream, the dream project of retired German school teacher, Ange Dries-Behrenbeck, will hold an open day tomorrow morning.

So what can people expect at the open day?

Ange says, "The children will give small performances, and people can see th materials we work with. My staff and I will be able to give them information about the work of Children's Dream, and the extremely advantageous method of immersive teaching."

Handouts will also be distributed explaining what "immersive teaching is, and according to this handout, "It's a method that teaches the students according to the school curriculum, using a language other than their mother tongue.

This 'target language' is used as a teaching tool, surrounding or immersing students in the second language.

"The aim of this method is functional language ability. Students adopt a foreign language through practical activity and the subjects taught. First communication skills are developed through understanding, listening and speaking, later through reading and writing.

"The children do not need any special abilities. Immersive teaching is suitable for children of all social stratum. Everybody has the required skills to learn multiple languages."

Ange's own children in Germany had grown up bilingual, and shortly after arriving in Cambodia, she considered the best way for Cambodian children to master the English language was through immersive education starting in kindergarten.

In December 2009 she founded the "First Immersive Teaching for Children's Dream" kindergarten in Siem Reap.

The curriculum is based on Ange's experiences as a primary school teacher, the Belgium kindergarten curriculum and material from an American kindergarten concept.

The national Cambodian curriculum for kindergartens was also incorporated into the regime, and teaching is done through the Montessori method.

The pilot experiment for the Children's Dream kindergarten project, which kicked off in 2009, consisted of twelve kids divided into two groups – one in the morning and one in the afternoon.

The historical pilot experiment will end in September, and the kids will then leave for primary school.

But they will continue to be supported to master English by having a one hour daily English class back in the kindergarten.

The next group of sixteen three-year-old kids to join Cambodia Dream will start at the kindergarten in October and attend class for 4.5 hours a day for the next three years.

The difference from the first experiment is that all the kids will be at the kindergarten all day instead of half a day.

Ange Dries-Behrenbeck Cambodia Dream project has also built schools, supplied water and engaged in many worthwhile activities, but that's all part of another story.

In the meantime, check out the kindergarten open day.

Details are: Saturday June 9: 8:30am - 11:30am.

F.I.T for Children's Dream kindergarten, Provincial Teacher Training Centre (PTTC), Charles de Gaulle Blvd, Mondul III, Sangkat Slorkram, Siem Reap.