

"Summer Fun Learning" Inherits Tribal Spirit

A Visit to Wen-Shui Elementary School and Experience Atayal Culture

(Courtesy of Hao-Ran Wang at the Division of Junior High and Elementary Education)



The Wen-Shui Elementary School in Tai'an Township, Miaoli County, is a small rural school dedicated to developing indigenous culture and education and shaping the concept of a tribal school. In recent years, through the "Summer Fun Learning" program, it has planned diversified courses to guide students to strengthen their tribal spirit. Ching-Hwa Tsai, Political Deputy Minister of Education, visited this school on August 7, 2020 to experience the courses centered on indigenous culture with student. He encouraged the school to continue to diversify its teaching, while pointing out that the Ministry of Education would lend its full support to enable students to learn happily at high-quality school.

In recent years, the Ministry of Education has continued to launch the "Summer Fun Learning" program during summer vacation to guide schools in adopting immersive activity-based courses in line with daily life based on the purpose of "empowerment in summer vacation and learning by doing," while inviting experts, artists, tribal elders, and tribal cultural workers to teach classes. The course planning emphasizes the integration of local characteristics and students' needs in the hope of enhancing students' interest in learning through the spirit of "innovative experiment and integrated learning" and the experience of diversified course contents. In particular, this program also attaches importance to guiding teachers and students to speak native languages naturally so as to allow them to experience local culture while promoting their understanding of and care for tribal culture.

Ching-Hwa Tsai, along with members of the National Language Promotion Committee, Ministry of Education, and the Local Education Committee visited the Wen-Shui Elementary School today, and they were warmly welcomed by the teachers and students of the school. Although the school is located in a remote rural area with only 54 students, it has long promoted the cultural education of indigenous groups and placed great emphasis on mother tongue culture to build a high-quality school environment, from traditional architecture to statues of Atayal heroes, bit by bit. Tsai and the students knitted by hand together and dressed up as Atayal warriors to set traps and make traditional hunting instruments for archery, while experiencing many featured classes with the students in a lively atmosphere.

Xiu-Ying Huang, Principal at the Wen-Shui Elementary School, said that the school is committed to developing its own characteristics and integrating the local Atayal culture, and that language is an important foundation of culture. This school adopts the language of Matu'uwal Atayal in teaching and integrates it into the curriculum. Furthermore, by adhering to the integrated teaching centered on inheritance and innovation, it explores the traditional tribal fields and deepens the cultural spirit through immersive tribal language and scenario-based courses.

For example, this school has set up hunting areas and millet fields to teach students to explore and understand the life styles of their own tribal group and the origins of worship and rituals in the past through traditional barns and meeting venues, all the while guiding them to learn and experience their tribal language; as such, the connotation of Atayal culture and the language of Matu'uwal Atayal can be passed on to the next generation, and students are also guided to internalize their tribal language into what they have learned to inherit and innovate Atayal culture.

The "Summer Fun Learning" program at the Wen-Shui Elementary School combines tribal resources and is not confined to learning "in the classroom." In this program, tribal elders and cultural workers are invited to give lectures on hunting knowledge and taboos and to introduce the methods of making hunting instruments, explaining to students the various functions of hunting tools and traps setting in the traditional hunting ground so that they can gain real experiences on the ground. In order to pass the culture on to its students, the school has built traditional barns, homes, hunting huts, and meeting venues of the Atayal tribe and adopted every space in this school as a site for tribal school education. From children to the elderly, the Wen-Shui Elementary School links every element of Atayal culture through education to pass the original tribal culture on to the next generation.

According to the K-12 Education Administration, Ministry of Education, "Summer Fun Learning" opens up the door for schools to extend stress-free learning and develop their own unique characteristics. Meanwhile, children in this program learn joyfully, demonstrate their creative ideas, and participate enthusiastically. This program provides an uninterrupted learning environment and offers more interesting courses during summer vacation. The diverse courses of the "Summer Fun Learning" program of each school are available on the dedicated webpage. Welcome to check them out!