



IGNITE: A Foundation for Learning
241 S. Cedros Ave., Solana Beach, CA 92075

September 2022

Greetings!

After 2 1/2 yrs of complete and partial Covid-closure, the school finally opened full time this July. Both children and teachers are happy to be back in school. The most exciting, newest addition to the school for the children and the teachers is the daily lunch program. This program is especially important because most of the children brought little or no lunch from home, leaving them without the required nutrition to study and learn.

Our nutrition program started before the summer vacation in February with lunch served two days a week only for the children. Because of its success and popularity, it has now been extended to three lunch meals a week and now includes the teachers as well! On the other two days, we serve alternately snacks of fruit or nuts. Including the teachers for meals has been a bonus for all and has strengthened the bond and relationship between teachers and students, lessening the hierarchical gap that pervades most Indian schools.

Spearheaded by our education director and created with all teachers, the program has been carefully designed to provide a healthy, well balanced, nutritious, and tasty diet suited to a child's developmental needs. The program is still evolving. Initially it was managed solely by the teachers, but now, the children are learning to cook and taking responsibility for complex tasks such as making Indian bread, which requires precision and use of fire, normally considered dangerous territory for a child. The elementary children are helping plan meals for the whole school. They measure the right amount of ingredients, making dough, and making some of the bread. All the children participate in jobs like cutting vegetables, setting mats for eating lunch, serving the meal, and washing their own dishes. The children work together beautifully and the boys and girls do all jobs without any gender division.

The children can not wait to go to the kitchen everyday and learn skills of measurement, cooperation, and planning. They happily work together. For most, this is the only balanced meal they get each day.

During a Parent-Teacher meeting, held recently at the school, "happy" parents had a lot to share about the results of the lunch program including:

- My child (7 yrs old) is eating vegetables he never ate at home and he is happily sharing about it at home saying "they are tastefully prepared at the school"
- My child (8yrs old) only ate Biryani (and this is what she always brought to the school) and now she is eating everything.
- Two boys (8 and 9 yrs old) help their mothers everyday to make dough for bread (traditionally it is a woman's job)

— My child (9 years old) has taught house cleaning to her sister and they both share the job of cleaning house and in times of need, they help me in cooking (which is not done in a traditional world).

— A 9 yrs old girl made a paratha (a version of Indian bread) for her father. It made the father so happy that he rewarded the child with a meal of her choice (again a woman’s Job and it is unusual for a father to acknowledge the daughter in this kind of community).

The mothers earlier had a constant complaint that their kids do not eat home cooked meals and ask for money to eat junk food. They shared about the change in their children’s behavior and their food and tastes. Happy mothers!

This is Montessori education at work! The children are engaged, working together, learning social and educational skills by doing and most importantly, they are Happy!

Thank you for your generous support. It helped provide the needs of the families at Covid time and now it is providing hot meals for the children.

The lunch program is changing the lives of children, the teachers, and the community!

With Love and Gratitude,
Amita and David

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