

"The reading of many books is as important as traveling a thousand miles."



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Children and I went on a study trip to Sabah, Malaysia, in the early years. The winter sun was bright, and the five-day, four-night experience was richly rewarding. Taking a boat ride to observe proboscis monkeys in the mangroves was a highly appealing activity. In the evening, thousands of fireflies hung low on the trees, turning the tall trees into sparkling Christmas trees. I stood beside the children, watching their lively and excited expressions, deeply believing in the importance of both "reading ten thousand books" and "traveling ten thousand miles." Without saying much, just looking at the experience of having a buffet breakfast in the morning over the four days, it was indeed a valuable lesson in civic education for the children.

On the second day in Sabah, the children woke up and followed the teacher into the hotel's buffet restaurant for breakfast. The diverse and delicious food made the children salivate. They wandered around with plates in hand, unable to decide what food to take first. When they encountered interesting decorations, they would loudly call their companions to come and see. Hungry children filled their plates with a large serving of fried rice, with salad and two slices of watermelon placed next to the plate like small hills. The excitement and noise of the children in front of the delicious food seemed to make them forget the teacher's instructions and requests until the lead teacher approached, reminding and guiding them, gradually calming the situation.



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After breakfast, during the gathering, I discussed the situation observed earlier with classmates, making the children aware that their behavior had disrupted other restaurant patrons and lacked the proper etiquette. The teachers reiterated the points they needed to be mindful of and then continued with the itinerary.

In the following days, I arrived at the restaurant very early, sitting aside, sipping coffee, and observing the students' behavior. The children arrived one by one, walking lightly, taking the time to carefully consider and plan their desired breakfast, and then politely selecting some food to enjoy.



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Occasionally, they would still gather in small groups in front of interesting food, chatting softly. However, overall, they were mindful of the restaurant's etiquette, showing consideration for the needs of the dining room and respecting other patrons. The waitstaff also praised the children for their excellent behavior, and visitors from different nationalities engaged in friendly conversations with the children. The relaxed and warm breakfast provided the children with opportunities to learn etiquette.

The learning experience during the study trip is extensive, ranging from understanding things in different regions to personal self-management and team discipline. The progress made by the children over the four mornings may prompt parents to engage in deeper reflections.