

乡村教育
促进会



RURAL CHINA
EDUCATION FOUNDATION



Annual Report
2009-10



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“Hope can be neither affirmed nor denied. Hope is like a path in the countryside: originally there was no path - yet, as people are walking all the time in the same spot, a way appears.”

- Lu Xun, Major Chinese Author of the 20th Century



About RCEF

The Rural China Education Foundation was registered in April 2005 as a 501(c)(3) public charity in the United States. Its mission is to promote education for people in rural China that prepares them to improve their own lives and communities.

Letter from RCEF's Co-Founders

Dear Friends,

We started RCEF five years ago with the hope that children growing up in rural China can receive a relevant, effective education—one that engages their interest in learning and hones skills they need in the real world. In searching for a path, we found footprints left by great Chinese educators like James Yen, Tao Xingzhi, and Liang Shuming who led visionary rural education movements in the 1920s and 1930s. However, few people in today's China are “walking in the same spot” as them, as Lu Xun put it. New explorers are needed.

For the last five years, RCEF's staff, volunteers, and grantee partners have been walking the terrain of Chinese rural education reform. With feet firmly set on the ground in rural schools, our staff and teachers have made great progress in developing innovative curriculum and teaching methods, but they also met with major challenges. This past summer, Guan Ai Primary School, the rural private school which was our main partner for three years, was forced to close due to a nationwide government policy that aims to consolidate village schools into centralized public schools. However, the local education bureau invited RCEF to continue working in nearby public schools, which you will read about in this report. The timeline on the next page traces RCEF's journey as we've grown from an organization started by overseas Chinese and short-term volunteers to one that is driven by full-time local Chinese educators working year-round in rural China.

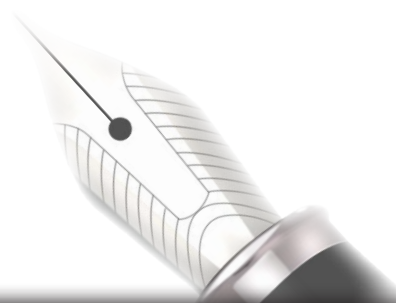
RCEF's role is to continue empowering more and more people to walk with us in exploring paths for rural education, researching how to meet rural children's needs and taking action to develop innovative and practical teaching methods. Every child impacted by a caring rural educator, every hour put in by RCEF's dedicated volunteers, and every donation invested by our generous supporters is a step forward in making the way for hope in rural education.

Thank you for reading this report and walking with us to improve rural education!

Warm regards,

Sara Lam, Diane Geng, Wei Ji Ma

Co-Founders



A Look Back at Five Years

2005

RCEF is registered as a 501(c)(3) public charity in California on April 28, 2005. RCEF organizes its first Summer Volunteer Teaching Program, which brings together international and mainland Chinese volunteers to teach extracurricular classes to children in villages during their school break.



Mainland Chinese and international volunteers at a training in Beijing.



Summer teaching volunteers prepare to set out to work in eight villages.

2006

RCEF continues to develop the summer volunteer model, expanding the program to 8 villages with volunteers from seven countries in North America, Europe, and Asia. We produce two publications: a handbook on short-term volunteer teaching and an environmental education textbook for rural elementary school students.

2007

RCEF begins to support year-round initiatives. We partner with the Yinjialin Village Community School in Shandong Province to pilot a year-round "Weekend Education Program" for village children and give Innovation Grants to grassroots rural education projects throughout the country. Funding from the prestigious Echoing Green Fellowship helped us to launch RCEF's first attempt to work directly in schools. We support year-round "Teaching Fellows" who work in rural schools and experiment with new teaching methods.



RCEF's Sara Lam interviews villagers in Yunnan Province.

A Look Back at Five Years



Mr. Yang and Ms. Sun, the couple who founded Guan Ai Primary School.

2008 RCEF selects one of our partner schools to launch a pilot school-wide reform program. We recruit experienced educators to serve as “Teaching Coaches” to principals and teachers at Guan Ai Primary School in Shanxi Province, assisting them to implement new policies, student-centered teaching methods, and curriculum.

2009 RCEF continues to work with Guan Ai School and expands to work with a public school in the same county, Xiaochao Primary School, focusing on developing two flagship curriculum subjects: Reading and Integrated Practice Class.



Students during recess at Guan Ai School.



RCEF continues to work with Xiaochao School in cooperation with the local education bureau.

2010 Guan Ai School is forced to close due to nationwide government policy. RCEF continues to work with Xiaochao School in cooperation of the local education bureau and adds another public school partner in the same township.

Program 2009-2010

The goals of the Integrative Rural Education Program in the 2009-2010 school year were to focus on curriculum design in two flagship subjects: Reading Class and Integrated Practice Class. We also began to explore how the program should work in public schools. The previous school year we had worked intensively in a private rural elementary school, Guan Ai Primary School, gaining valuable insight into all aspects of school management and teaching. This helped us to evaluate which curriculum subjects have the most space to exercise students' independent thinking and expose them to topics beyond their textbooks that are relevant to their lives and communities. Based on this, we selected two subjects to focus our curriculum development efforts on: Reading and Integrated Practice Class.

Team

The RCEF program team consisted of three Americans and five mainland Chinese, all of whom had backgrounds in education and rural development in China.



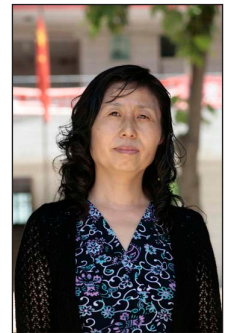
Sara Lam
Executive Director
of Programs



Diane Geng
Executive Director
of Operations



Zhao Junfang
Monitoring &
Evaluation Specialist



Hu Laxian
Teaching & Curriculum
Specialist



Zheng Kai
Program Manager



Sun Chuanmei
Program Manager



Rong Lihua
Program Manager



Kiel Harell
English Teaching Coach

Sites

We partnered with two rural schools in Yongji, Shanxi Province, a county in northwest China. **Guan Ai Primary School** was a private non-profit boarding school of about 130 students in grades 1 to 6. It had the limited resources of a typical rural school and was located in an area with social and economic conditions common across villages in northern China. Since it was privately managed, RCEF and the principal were able to design the school schedule, school policies, and teacher evaluation system to accommodate the goals of our program.



Xiaochao Primary School is a public school that serves around 153 students in grades 1 to 6. Many of them are “left-behind children” whose parents have migrated to cities to work. Most of Xiaochao’s teachers live in the surrounding villages and have taught at the school for a decade or more. While its test scores consistently rank at the top of the township, Xiaochao wants to add more enriching activities to its curriculum and bolster students’ well-rounded development.



Teacher Training Process

We recognize that it is intimidating for a teacher to develop new curriculum alone. Thus, our curriculum development process was a team effort in which RCEF staff and school teachers worked together to plan, execute, document, and reflect on lessons.



The teachers on the team took turns being the main teacher to deliver a lesson. The other team members would come to observe and help if needed. Afterwards, the team would meet to discuss how the class went and plan the next lesson together.

Since everybody had a chance to give input on and build the curriculum, teachers felt less individual pressure and appreciated the group wisdom in problem solving and coming up with creative ideas.



Reading Curriculum

The Yongji education bureau requires that elementary schools schedule one period of Reading Class every day. However, there is no set curriculum for how to teach Reading Class and education bureau officials are interested in training teachers to use methods that RCEF develops in this program.



RCEF teachers set up school libraries and gave students free time to read.



RCEF teachers facilitated activities to help students express their own opinions and think more deeply about the books they read.

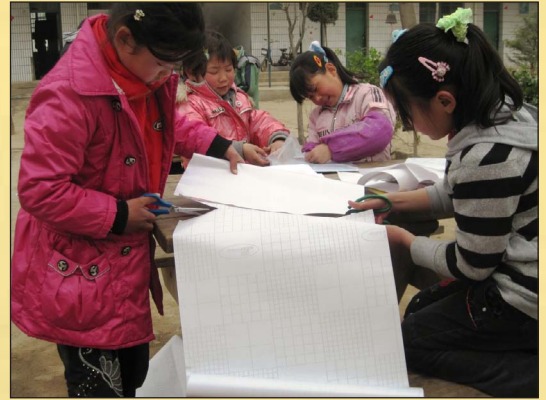
Case Study: Training Little Librarians

By Sun Chuanmei, Program Manager

To get students more involved in taking care of the school library, we began a new extracurricular elective class called "Library Management." At first, I observed that most of the students who signed up just came to play. I felt that this was not the right attitude and thought about how to change it.

Reading Curriculum

I decided that letting them experience the actual tasks of management was very important. Thus, we spend most of the time in class practicing hands-on tasks like checking out and checking in books from beginning to end. We let the students split into groups and practice being temporary librarians. At first, many didn't take their work seriously. They believed that registering books was all there is to being a librarian. Over the course of our class though, they began to see that capable and qualified librarians must be role models and leaders in the library. They have to pay attention to cleanliness and discipline, have a good attitude towards other students, and help others.



We paid a lot of attention to the students' own ideas. For example, they got to pick names for their groups and discuss which days they wanted to be in charge of the library. Some students wrote that their greatest hope is to become a librarian someday. To see that our class sparked some young dreams makes me very happy. Here is one of the essays by fourth grader Chenru Ren:

Journal Entry October 27, 2009

I'm so happy today because I've become a librarian! At first I thought that becoming a librarian was just for fun. Actually, as a librarian you need to fill out forms. When you help people pick books, you have to have a smile on your face. It's easy to say but hard to do! It was very hard for me in the beginning. After awhile, with the help of the teacher, I've slowly improved. I definitely want to become a real librarian to protect my country and be useful to society.

- Chenru Ren



Integrated Practice Curriculum

Integrated Practice Class is a mandatory primary school subject which emphasizes interdisciplinary, community-based learning. It helps students to learn more about their own culture and environment and to develop thinking and problem solving skills. RCEF's methods for this class have many similarities to place-based education and service-learning in the United States.



Above: Students learned to raise chickens and participated in every step of the process from designing and building a chicken coop to feeding the chickens and collecting their eggs to sell at the market.



Below: Students helped to landscape the school campus and maintain the trees.



Left: Students put together a fundraising campaign to help an impoverished rural school in Gansu province.

Case Study: Sweet Potato Investigation

By Sara Lam, Executive Director of Programs

This school year, Guan Ai teachers and RCEF staff formed an “Integrative Practice Class” project group. Focusing on fourth and fifth grade students, they chose a topic familiar to students that could be explored through hands-on activities and investigations in the community: the history and culture of the sweet potato. Sweet potatoes are a common crop grown and eaten in rural China. Guan Ai students enjoy eating them often but know little about how they are cultivated or the important place they have in history.

Harvesting Sweet Potatoes



We started with an activity that we knew would get students hooked - eating sweet potatoes. A villager agreed to let students harvest and roast some of his sweet potato crop. Afterwards, they wrote instruction booklets about the process.

Integrated Practice Curriculum

Making Sweet Potato Starch

In the village, most sweet potatoes are made into starch for noodles (粉条). We wanted students to appreciate the professional expertise and hard work that is required. Students weighed the sweet potatoes and used traditional tools borrowed from villagers to make flour and starch. After this class, the students were able to add another chapter to their instruction booklets.



“When weighing the sweet potatoes, I discovered a huge gap between student performance in math class and their ability to use math in practice. For example, when figuring out the potatoes’ weight, some groups didn’t correctly subtract the weight of the basin that held the potatoes, resulting in major errors. Some students didn’t know how to use the scale. This shows problems in our teaching. We over-emphasize the textbook instead of practical skills in our math classroom; we should do whatever we can to design ways for students to try out math principles in practice.”



– Mr. Pei, Curriculum Teacher

Integrated Practice Curriculum

Learning about the history of sweet potatoes

The students interviewed an elderly villager who told them about how sweet potatoes were introduced to this area, how methods of farming have changed, and why sweet potatoes were among the few things they had to eat during the famine of the 1950s and 60s. After the interview, students organized their interview notes into a coherent essay.



Planting and Cooking Sweet Potatoes

In the spring, the students learned about the process of raising sweet potato seedlings and planting them in the fields. They also cooked many sweet potato recipes. To read more about these activities, visit our website at www.ruralchina.org.



Sharing

RCEF's goal is to share the best practices and lessons learned from our curriculum development with more rural teachers. We organize conferences and send staff and teachers on study trips and trainings to learn from and share with others.

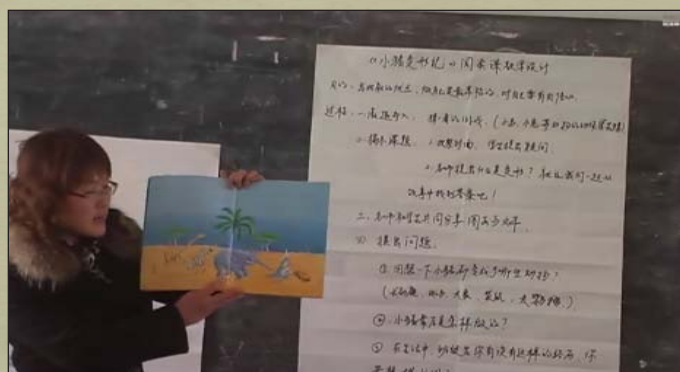
Peer-to-Peer Sharing

In February 2010, rural teachers from six schools in three provinces gathered at Guan Ai School for a three-day conference. RCEF teachers shared in detail how they taught, what difficulties they faced, and how they dealt with these practical challenges.



Teachers learned RCEF's method of facilitating students to do community research by carrying out the steps of a demonstration project. Participants brought up concerns and challenges they would face in their own classrooms implementing such a class and the whole group offered ideas and advice.

The conference also promoted extracurricular reading activities. One teacher wrote, "Before I came to this meeting, I would simply give students some content to read. They didn't have any initiative and finished the task mechanically. However, now I want to let them choose books that they like and slowly build up their habit of reading."



Sharing



Two RCEF curriculum teachers attended a national conference on reading curriculum that took place in Hangzhou City.



An American librarian from Trinity School in California talked about library management with RCEF students and teachers.



RCEF participated in the Clinton Global Initiative Annual Meeting. RCEF was one of the few NGOs at the conference from China and the only one focused directly on rural Chinese education.



Eight teachers from Windrush School in California exchanged service learning and reading methods with RCEF teachers.



RCEF teachers shared experiences in developing reading curriculum at a conference in Qikou, another rural area of Shanxi Province.

Recognition

We are grateful for support from the many individuals who donated to RCEF in 2009-2010 and for grants and in-kind support from the following groups:



globalgiving



Jack C. Tang Family Fund
唐驥千家族基金



Givology
give to learn, learn to give

THE GLOBAL FUND FOR
Children



Cleary Gottlieb Steen
& Hamilton LLP

Tiger Woods Foundation

Clinton Global Initiative

TAG Philanthropic Foundation

JP Morgan Chase Foundation

Finances

Statement of Financial Activities

September 1, 2009 to August 31, 2010

Revenue	Total
Calendar Sales	7,516
Individual & Small Business Contributions	38,829
Grants	55,139
Other Revenue	2,239
Total Revenue	\$103,722

Expenses	Total
Administrative Salaries and Benefits	18,685
General Administrative Expenses	10,850
Innovation Grants Program	1,869
Integrative Rural Education Program	
Guai Ai School Operations	31,467
Teaching Materials	2,071
Teacher Professional Development	5,778
Program Administration	52,000
Total Integrative Rural Education Program	91,316
Other Expenses	34
Total Expenses	\$122,754

Change in Net Assets	\$ (19,031)
Net Assets Beginning of Year	\$ 264,267
Net Assets End of Year	\$ 245,236

RCEF financial reports and a list of donors is available on our website. The Rural China Education Foundation is a 501(c)(3) public charity registered in the U.S.A. Donations in the U.S. are 100% tax-deductible. If you would like to assist RCEF by donating or volunteering, visit our website at www.ruralchina.org and follow the links. Checks made payable to "Rural China Education Foundation" can also be sent to:

Rural China Education Foundation
PO Box 92424
Rochester, NY 14692-0424
U.S.A.

Rural China Education Foundation
PO Box 92424
Rochester, NY 14692-0424
U.S.A.

+1-585-610-4325
www.ruralchina.org
info@ruralchina.org



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