

乡村教育
促进会



RURAL CHINA
EDUCATION FOUNDATION



服务学习手册
Service Learning Handbook

English Version



Rural China Education Foundation (RCEF) Service Learning Handbook

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About the Rural China Education Foundation

The Rural China Education Foundation (RCEF) is an international non-for-profit organization dedicated to promoting education that prepares rural students to improve their own lives and communities. RCEF supports rural educators' development and growth through funding, coaching, networking and sharing of pedagogical ideas and educational resources. RCEF's website is at www.ruralchina.org, and can be reached at info@ruralchina.org.

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Chinese Language Version

A Chinese language version of this Handbook can be requested by emailing info@ruralchina.org.

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Use of this Handbook

This Handbook was written for RCEF staff and RCEF-supported teachers as well as educators around China and the world who are interested in knowing more about Service Learning. It presents background information about the role of Service Learning in RCEF's work in rural China, describes what Service Learning (and especially high-quality Service Learning) is, traces the tradition of Service Learning in Chinese history, and provides suggestions for planning and evaluating Service Learning projects.

Service Learning is a broad approach that can be implemented in very different ways. While there are certain principles that high quality Service Learning programs have in common, there is no single “correct” way of doing Service Learning. Service Learning should be primarily driven by community needs and student interest. Since communities face different challenges and students are concerned about different issues, Service Learning necessarily looks different in different contexts. You may find useful suggestions or new ideas from our experiences, but it would be difficult and ineffective to attempt to directly replicate any of our specific projects. We encourage teachers to be creative, try different methods, and share ideas and experiences with us! We would love to include them in future publications so that more educators can benefit from them.

Why focus on education for improving communities?

RCEF's mission:

To promote education that prepares people in rural China to improve their lives and their communities.

The rural-urban divide is arguably the most pressing social problem facing China today. People who reside in rural areas have lower income, fewer employment opportunities and less access to high quality public services such as education and healthcare. One might assume that investing in rural education would naturally aid in the development of rural communities. However, a closer look at the organization and curriculum of rural schools compels us to question this assumption.

Rural students spend very little time in their homes and communities. Many schools require students to attend extra lessons for the purpose of improving test scores and it is not uncommon for students to spend twelve hours or more at school. Boarding schools are very common in many rural areas. The government has mandated the closing of small rural schools to consolidate resources into larger centralized schools, forcing many students to board at schools that are far from home. Furthermore, many rural parents live in the city throughout the year for work. They are unable to care for their children themselves and opt to send their children to

boarding schools. As a result, many rural students have very little understanding of, or connection to, their villages.

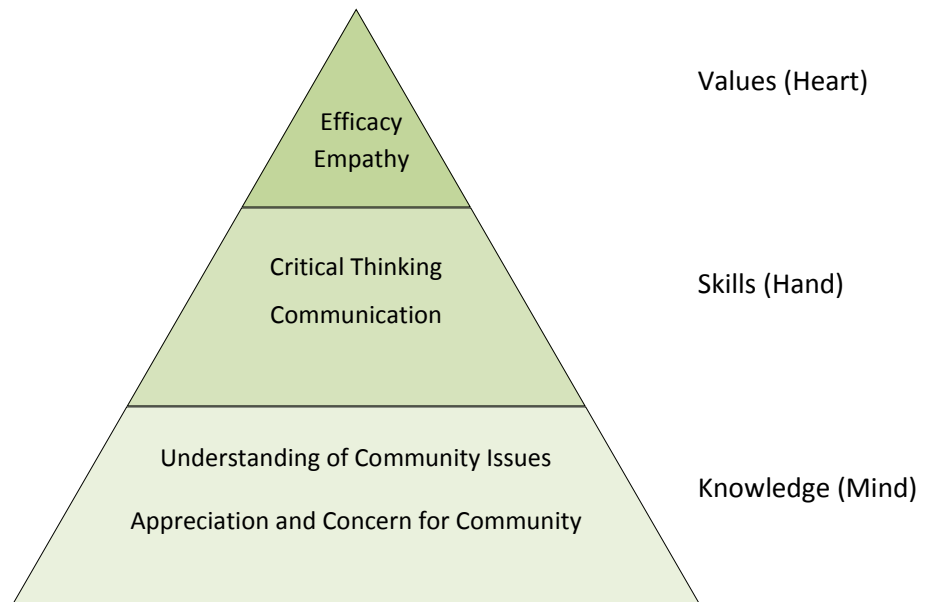
This disconnect is exacerbated by the curriculum which does not encourage students to learn about their communities. China has one national curriculum that allows little flexibility to accommodate the local context of different regions. In addition, the curriculum is geared towards the urban lifestyle and contains information, examples, pictures and questions that are unfamiliar or even incomprehensible to many rural students. This not only limits rural students' opportunities to understand their communities, but it also sends the implicit message that rural cultures and lifestyles are inferior or backward, a message which is strongly reinforced in popular culture. We believe that rural students should have opportunities to broaden their horizons and gain a better understanding of their own country and society, including urban culture; however, this should be done purposefully in ways that support the learning of rural children. When urban culture is used as the context for teaching curricular content in all subject areas, the irrelevance and unfamiliarity becomes an obstacle for rural students to meet learning objectives. Further, it is important that curricular materials do not reinforce the belief that urban culture is inherently superior. On the contrary, we aim to support students in developing the knowledge, skills and courage that they need to improve their lives and meet their goals whether they stay in their village or move away.

The current education system is structured to encourage a “brain drain” of the most successful students to the city while failing to equip those left behind with preparation for contributing to their hometowns. The system is built around one goal and one standard for success – college entrance and a desirable job in the city. Students who are successful leave the village, find a good job in the city, and are not actively encouraged to use their newly found resources to contribute to the development of their hometowns. The students who are left behind have only been educated for the purpose of preparing for exams. If they are unable to enter university, much of what they learned will be of little use to them. Their schooling has not fostered the knowledge and skills they need to make change in their communities.

RCEF questions the assumption that strengthening this type of education will facilitate rural development. At best, it may help a small group of rural students rise to the top, while their peers and future generations of rural children are left behind. We believe that *different* education is needed, rather than more resources for the same education.

What do we mean by education for improving communities?

To help us envision the kind of education that aligns with our mission, we thought of rural Chinese who we know who have made significant contributions to their villages. We identified common characteristics that were instrumental to their effectiveness, and adopted these as our main goal for education. Those goals are: developing an understanding of community issues, developing a sense of appreciation and care for their communities, building confidence, building communication and collaboration skills, and building critical thinking skills.



Knowledge about the situation of our communities—including concerns, needs and assets—informs action. However, simply understanding problems that need to be addressed is not sufficient. We also need to effectively care about our communities and have a sense of efficacy to be motivated to act. In order to be effective, we need to have abilities such as critical thinking skills to plan and evaluate our actions, and communication and leadership skills to mobilize others to participate. In this way, RCEF goals are intertwined and work together to support students in taking action to improve their lives and their communities.

In addition to supporting students to make a difference in their lives and communities, we believe that these learning goals inherently benefit students’ individual development and well-being as well. The goals reflect cognitive, social and emotional development as well as skills acquisition to support well-rounded growth. They are important characteristics that support us in building healthy and supportive relationships with others, solving everyday problems, and working effectively in a range of professions.

Why do we promote Service Learning?

Although there are many different ways that the above-mentioned knowledge, skills and values can be fostered, we have chosen to focus on Service Learning because it allows students to learn experientially (to learn by doing). In addition, Service Learning integrates all of these goals coherently into one learning experience, as opposed to teaching the five goals through separate curricula. Students develop an understanding of community issues by conducting research. They develop an appreciation for their community during the research process and through building relationships with role models in the community. They develop critical thinking skills as they analyze their data, create action plans and reflect on their learning. They develop communication and collaboration skills as they deliberate to decide next steps and design and

implement service projects together. They develop a sense of empathy as they interact with different members of the community and understand their situations and perspectives. Finally, they develop a sense of efficacy as they experience success and see the results of their service. While we might not be able to achieve all of these objectives in each Service Learning project, we strive to pursue them all in the overall curriculum.

What is Service Learning?

According to the definition by *Learn and Serve America*, Service Learning is an educational approach which “integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities”. In a typical Service Learning project, students identify problems that they are concerned about in their community, research the problems and potential solutions, create and implement a plan for addressing the problem, and reflect on their own learning and action throughout the process.

Service Learning emphasizes the equal importance of, and close connection between, ‘service’ and ‘learning’, which sets it aside from internships, volunteering, community service, and labor service. American scholar Sigmon classifies the various relationships between service and learning into the following four categories¹:

1. Service LEARNING	The primary goal is to learn; service impact is secondary.
2. SERVICE Learning	The primary goal is to serve; the impact on learning is secondary.
3. Service Learning	Service and learning goals are disconnected
4. SERVICE LEARNING	Service and learning are mutually reinforcing.

If we think about some of the experiences that are most commonly available to students, internships are closest to the first category, “Service LEARNING”, in which the primary goal is for students to learn about a particular profession. Many volunteer and community service programs are similar to the second type, “SERVICE Learning”. The service that students engage in does not draw on academic learning that they may also be engaged in, and students are not asked to reflect on their experiences to gain new insights. We strive to implement and promote “Service Learning” which contributes meaningfully to student learning *and* to community

¹ Sigmon, 1996

development. We see learning and service goals as equally important and inherently interdependent components of our curriculum.

To give you an idea of what Service Learning might look like in a rural Chinese primary school, here is an overview of one of RCEF's past projects:

Case Study: Anti-Smoking Project

Guan Ai School is a rural primary school in Yongji County, Shanxi Province. The 6th graders learned about the hazards of smoking in their social studies class, and enthusiastically attempted to persuade their social studies teacher to quit smoking. They were unsuccessful but concerned about the problem and motivated to do more. Their teachers picked up on their interest in this problem, and organized a Service Learning project for 3rd to 6th graders.

First, the students conducted investigations to understand the smoking problem in surrounding villages. They designed interview protocols and each class interviewed people from a different village. Students in different grades used different methods for analyzing the quantitative data depending on their level in math. They wrote reports based on the qualitative and quantitative data they collected. The students were surprised to find that most smokers in the villages wanted to quit, and a very large percentage of them had attempted to quit before. Based on their findings, they decided to launch a public education campaign that would focus not only on the hazards of smoking, as many anti-smoking campaigns do, but also on the difficulties of quitting and effective methods for quitting.

Next, the students collected information and created materials for their campaign. They interviewed a local doctor and looked up resources online. All students participated in designing materials such as posters and calendars, and some students prepared presentations.

Finally, the students gave presentations at village meetings in the villages where they had conducted their investigations and distributed the informative materials they had created. Throughout the process, students reflected on what they were doing and learning, and made or revised next steps based on these reflections.

During this project, students learned a great deal of knowledge surrounding the theme of smoking, both generally and specifically regarding their community, but also reinforced their learning of curricular knowledge such as math (in analysis and presentation of data), language arts (through reading information they collected and writing reports and speeches), health education and art (as they designed promotional materials). In addition, they gained skills in interacting with adults, public speaking, conducting research, planning a project and much more. Many students expressed that they felt more confident and brave after doing the project. Perhaps most importantly, they experienced a new role for themselves as integral members of the community who can make a difference.

How does Service Learning fit into the context of China?

You may be wondering: Is Service Learning a concept imported from the West? Could it work in China? In fact, the philosophy of Service Learning has deep roots in Chinese culture and education, and much of this tradition was developed in rural areas. Serving the needs of the country has always been a primary purpose of education and academics in China, one that was elevated above education for economic development or education for its own sake. The great Chinese philosophers saw it as their responsibility to use their knowledge to help rulers strengthen the country and the goal of most students was to excel in the national examinations in order to become civil servants. Service Learning was a central part of the philosophy and educational approach of Tao Xingzhi, China's most influential modern educator. He advocated making the whole of society a school in which students could learn how to participate in and transform their communities. These were not just lofty ideals. Tao was very successful at implementing these ideas in his rural schools until his work was disrupted by the Japanese invasion. In fact, he started the Xiaozhuang Normal College for teachers based on this approach, which is still running today.

During the Mao era, service was a major component of education at all levels, from labor education in primary school to college students who were sent to work in the countryside. However, this educational approach was significantly different from Service Learning because the service involved was not always integrated with academic learning, and because the service was often dictated by the government or Party, rather than being shaped by the students' own concerns or the concerns of their communities. Nevertheless, it was a continuation of the tradition of service in education in Chinese society and culture.

Since China's "Reform and Opening Up" period in the late 1970's, the role of service in education has greatly weakened. Education has become more exam-oriented and schools have become more detached from the communities to which they belong. Even so, there are still educators around the country who are successful at keeping the spirit of Service Learning alive. One of the most well-known examples comes from the village of Qianyuan Zhuang in Shanxi Province, where the village Party secretary and the township head of education started working together in the late 1980s to integrate basic education, vocational education and adult education. Under this model, students not only learned traditional academic content, but also scientific knowledge and vocational skills in agriculture. Students and teachers worked together to bring new agricultural techniques to villagers and changed the face of the community. Their project drove economic development in the village and increased the community's commitment to, and involvement in education, resulting in 100% enrollment and retention of school-aged children and lower illiteracy among adults (Li, 2009).

Integrated Practice Class is a new subject initiated in China's curriculum reforms, and opens up a new space to implement Service Learning in primary and middle schools. The goal of Integrated Practice Class is "to strengthen the connection between education and students' lives and between school and society, to help students gain positive, firsthand experience in engaging

in practice, to increase students' understanding of the connection between themselves, the natural environment and society, and to develop students' creativity, practical skills, social responsibility and character" (P.R.C. Ministry of Education). The content of the class falls into four categories. The first is "inquiry-based learning", which should be "based on students' own interests" and aims to "foster students' enthusiasm and ability for independent and collaborative learning". The second is "community service and practice", with the aim of "strengthening students' community service consciousness and social responsibility". The Standards suggest that community service should integrate academic learning from different disciplines and closely connect with students' lives. It emphasizes the leadership role of students throughout the service process from planning to evaluation. The final two categories are labor and vocational education, and informational technology. Clearly, the standards for integrated practice class are very closely aligned with standards for high quality Service Learning.

This new subject provides space for Service Learning by legitimizing it through policy and mandating the allocation of three class periods a week to its teaching². Unfortunately, there has been very little professional development for educators on how to implement this new and unfamiliar subject. As a result, few schools in China actually implement it on a regular basis. This is why curriculum development and professional development for Service Learning is a top priority for RCEF.

Gaining support for Service Learning

In China, concerns about accidents and injury outside the classroom have been heightened in recent years and many schools are extremely wary of activities which require students to leave the school grounds. Often, education officials and school administration are also unsupportive of Service Learning because they believe that it takes time away from subjects covered in the exams. In this environment, we have found that leveraging curriculum reform policy in a way that benefits the Bureau of Education can increase their support for Service Learning projects.

Since Integrated Practice Class is such a new subject and is given so little attention by most schools, successful examples of this class being taught can actually bring pride and recognition to a school and county. One possible way of getting recognition is by applying to become a provincial or national level education research project. Liaise with the Bureau of Education in the application process and offer to list their representatives as the leaders of the project. They are more likely to be supportive if they can also take credit. Keep a thorough record of activities, including student work, photos and other material, for publicity purposes.

² The three class periods do not need to be at regular times each week. They can be consolidated or distributed throughout the semester in a way that best facilitates the projects.

What does high quality Service Learning look like?

While there is no cookie-cutter model for Service Learning programs, there are principles that can guide different types of Service Learning program to make them more effective. The first five principles are based on empirical research conducted in the United States³, but are reinforced by our experience in adapting them to the contexts we worked in in rural China. We added the final two principles, which we believe to be important considering the situation of rural Chinese schools and our mission.

As you read about these principles, bear in mind that it is extremely difficult even for veteran Service Learning teachers to demonstrate all of these principles in their teaching. For a teacher who is new to Service Learning, it is more important that one takes the first step and gives Service Learning a try rather than be intimidated by these standards. Choose one or two principles to work on at a time, and start with small and attainable goals. Then, you can gradually improve your practice through reflection and experience.

Principles of Effective Practice

- Student voice
- Meaningful service
- Curriculum integration
- Strengthening relationships
 - Sufficient duration
 - Reflection
- Focus on student learning goals

1) *Student Voice*

Research shows that letting students make decisions and shape every stage of the process can strengthen students' academic and civic engagement. Specifically, studies show that students who have more opportunities to participate in decision-making at school were better at expressing their opinions, had stronger leadership and public speaking skills, and saw themselves as people who could make change⁴. Notice that many of the skills associated with student voice are also the educational goals of RCEF.

In Service Learning programs, student voice doesn't just mean letting students choose the issue and goal of a project. Rather, students can be involved in making decisions at every step. For example, students can make the plans for how to conduct research and service action and participate in designing the evaluation of their projects.

³ The six principles are based on the research of Shelley Billig, who identified practices that are commonly considered effective in the field of Service Learning and analyzed the findings of a number of studies to identify which were associated with positive student outcomes. Her article "Unpacking What Words in Service Learning" can be accessed at <http://www.nylc.org/sites/nylc.org/files/files/323unpacking.pdf>

⁴ Mitra and Oldfather, as cited in Billig.

Many schools have little experience with student voice, and providing opportunities for student voice can be very challenging for both teachers and students at first. Exercising student voice requires a lot of skills that do not naturally exist, but must be learned and practiced. These include the ability to carefully consider other people's viewpoints, disagree respectfully, ask good questions, move towards consensus, and many more. Similarly, teaching a class where students have a stronger voice can be intimidating to the teacher and requires facilitation skills that do not come naturally to many teachers. Therefore, we suggest that teachers start out by taking more control over the Service Learning process and gradually open up more opportunities for student voice over time. During this process, it is important for the teacher to explicitly teach students the skills they need to exercise their voice, and provide support such as modeling and scaffolding. As the teacher becomes more confident and comfortable in facilitating open classroom discussions and the students build up their capacity for exercising their voices, students can be given more and more responsibility for decision-making.

2) Meaningful Service

Research shows that students become more engaged and learn more effectively when they participate in service that is meaningful to them and their community⁵. What counts as meaningful service varies for different people and contexts, but here are a few factors to consider when developing service projects:

Does the project fulfill a real need in the community? One very common service activity in China is having students wash their grandparents' feet during a traditional holiday to honor the elderly. This act is meant to show them respect. However, while elderly people in rural areas do have needs, feet-washing is not usually a high priority among them. To better serve the elderly, students might petition the school or village committee to provide a space where they can chat or play cards together, create a buddy system where a young person in the village visits and checks on elderly people who live alone, etc. Whatever they decide to do, it should be based on sincere efforts to understand the perspectives of the elderly through face-to-face conversations.

Is the project meaningful and relevant to students? A service project will mean more to students if it addresses a problem that they are personally concerned about. They will be more invested if they developed the service plan based on what they learned through their own investigations. For example, in an anti-smoking project that RCEF teachers facilitated, students identified the smoking problem and were motivated to address it, and their research findings led them to focus on sharing resources and effective methods for quitting. Additionally, service actions that allow students to interact with other members of the community and develop new relationships may also be more meaningful for both students and community members.

Is the project meaningful for student learning? Some service projects simply have students serving as free labor doing monotonous work such as picking up trash around the village each week. Although improving the village environment is a worthy cause, students will not get excited and will not learn much by doing the same unchallenging activity each week. There are more meaningful ways to take action against the same problem. For example, in most villages, residents simply empty their household trash in ditches alongside village paths, which creates an unpleasant and unsanitary living environment, especially for those whose homes are

⁵ Billig, Root & Jesse, 2005; Blank, 1997, as cited in Billig

near the garbage ditches. As a service action, students could design and collaborate with the village governing committee to implement feasible, convenient and low-cost options for improving trash disposal in the village. Through such an activity, students can learn problem solving skills as they create their designs, learn how to create and persuasively present proposals as they share their ideas with their peers and the village governing committee, and develop many other skills that they can use inside and outside of the classroom.

3) Curriculum Integration

Service Learning can support students in the process of learning and reinforcing knowledge and skills from other content areas. A number of studies have shown that there is a connection between curriculum integration in Service Learning and improved academic outcomes⁶. However, research also shows that curricular content needs to be purposefully integrated to be effective. This means that the teacher must be clear about the academic goals of the project and individual activities, these goals must be suitable and feasible for the project, the activities must be clearly connected with the academic goals, and academic learning must be supported through reflection⁷.

To illustrate this with an example, let's imagine an activity in which students are writing an open letter to the village. Student learning will not naturally happen just by writing the letter. Rather, the teacher must be clear while planning the lessons about what particular goal she hopes to meet. If she decided on the goal of learning persuasive writing for the first lesson, for example, she will then have to consider the specific skills and techniques students will need in order to write persuasively, and design the activity around those skills and techniques. After the students have written the letter, and perhaps again after posting the letter in the village, the teacher can encourage students to reflect on their writing, their learning process, the response of community members and the effectiveness of their writing and action.

4) Intellectually Challenging Reflection

Reflection is crucial in Service Learning activities. It is the glue that holds “service” and “learning” together. If students are constantly taking action without pausing to reflect, they miss opportunities to identify areas that need improvement, make connections between the pieces of information they obtain, uncover the root causes of problems and take stock of their learning. Studies have found that high quality reflection in Service Learning strengthens student outcomes and helps students develop higher level thinking skills⁸. Reflection does not just happen at the end of a project, but at every single step.

Reflection does not simply mean writing down one's feelings after an activity; reflection should be intellectually challenging. Intellectually-challenging reflection pushes students to think more deeply about an issue, draw connections between different information, find and evaluate multiple solutions or rethink their beliefs and assumptions. Research shows connections between intellectually challenging reflection and academic engagement, civic engagement and acquisition

⁶ (Billig and Klute 2003; Billig, Klute, and Sandel 2003; Meyer, Billig, and Hofschire 2004; Santmire, Giraud, and Groskopf 1999; Billig, Root, and Jesse 2005) as cited in Billig

⁷ Ammon, Furco, Chi, and Middaugh (2001) as cited in Billig

⁸ (Eyler, Giles, and Schmiede 1996; King and Kitchener 1994; Leming 2001) in Billig, 2007

of knowledge and skills⁹. Imagine that your students have returned from conducting interviews with villagers about their smoking habits. Asking students to summarize what they learned and talk about how they felt about the activity would not be very intellectual challenging. Instead, it would be more challenging to ask students questions such as:

- Were any of the villagers reluctant to be interviewed? Did anyone seem to be answering in a dishonest way? Why do you think they responded like that? What can we do to become more effective interviewers?
- Did you find that different groups of people have different smoking habits (e.g. groups by age, gender, economic situation)? Why do you think that is?
- Did you discover anything unexpected or surprising? What was your initial expectation? How would you explain this difference?
- Considering what we now know about local smoking habits, what are the possible strategies for taking action? Which of these do you think would be most effective? Why?

Reflection should be developmentally appropriate and skills for reflection should be explicitly taught and modeled. Reflection skills that students need to learn include problem-solving, decision-making, classification and hypothesis-testing¹⁰. Finally, reflection should lead into further action, be it new questions to research, new problems to solve or new ideas to test out.

5) Program Duration

In order to make a greater impact on students, studies have shown that Service Learning projects must be sustained over a sufficient period of time, ideally at least one semester. During Service Learning, students learn by conducting in-depth analysis, engaging in deliberation, discovering new questions to investigate, and planning, taking action and reflecting on their learning and action. All of this takes time. Though it is possible to do smaller Service Learning projects, and it may be a good idea to try a smaller project for your first time, we do strongly recommend allowing students to build up projects over longer periods.

6) Strengthening Relationships

There are three components to strengthening relationships in Service Learning: strengthening relationships within the class, developing relationships with community members and collaborating with community organizations.

Service Learning is a great opportunity for strengthening the class community. In most other classes in rural China, students have very little time to interact with each other, much less to collaborate in achieving shared goals like they do in Service Learning. It is important to create opportunities for students to deliberate, make decisions collectively, share responsibility and

⁹ (Billig, Root, and Jesse 2005; Billig, Root, and Jesse 2006; Root and Billig in press). In Billig

¹⁰ Billig, 2007

cooperate with each other. Through these experiences, students learn the value of communities and learn how to effectively participate in such communities.

Because RCEF aims to develop students' sense of empathy and sense of pride in their communities, we also create opportunities for students to develop meaningful relationships with individual members of the community. Many rural students are not aware of the impressive expertise that people in their community hold because it is not valued in mainstream culture. When students have the opportunity to apprentice with local experts or learn about their work, they often gain a new appreciation for their own community and find new role models among community adults. When students identify community problems to research and address, they may not truly understand how different people in the community feel the effects of those problems. In these situations, they may only know one side of the story, or their concern about the problem may be only intellectual and not visceral or emotional. By personally interacting with people who are affected by problems in different ways, students develop a strengthened sense of empathy, gain a richer understanding of issues, and become more invested in solving the problems.

Sometimes, the most logical research or service approaches for a certain project do not lend themselves to deep, meaningful interactions. For example, in the anti-smoking campaign, students needed to survey many villagers to understand the prevalence and severity of local smoking habits. Therefore, their interaction with each person was short, highly structured and less personal. Even if this is the case, we should still try to create additional opportunities for students to develop meaningful relationships with community members if possible.

Collaborating with community organizations can make Service Learning much richer. By collaborating with an organization, students can make a larger impact by leveraging the existing resources, networks and projects of the organization. Additionally, this gives students an opportunity to learn how organizations work through firsthand experience. The following are some of the most common types of organizations in villages:

- Village Governing Committees
- Branches of the Women's Federation
- Associations of the Elderly
- Farming Collectives
- Folk Art Troupes
- Handicrafts Collectives

7) *Focusing on Goals for Student Learning*

Because Service Learning often involves exciting and attention-grabbing activities, all too often, the focus of teachers is shifted to the activity itself rather than the students and their learning. Even teachers who do think about student learning sometimes tend to think about what students can learn about the issue itself rather than the important skills and values they can practice in the process. Therefore, it is important for us to take time throughout the project to ask ourselves: What is the point of this activity? How can I fully exploit it for its learning potential? For RCEF staff and teachers, it is especially important to consider how each activity can be linked to RCEF's educational goals. Each step of a project is like a gold mine, but we often rush through without taking full advantage of it.

The following table shows how RCEF goals can be incorporated into each step of Service Learning projects. Of course, this is not a rigid or exhaustive list because every theme offers different opportunities.

STAGE	GOALS	ACTIONS
1. DECIDING ON A THEME (CHOOSING AN ISSUE AND GOAL)	CRITICAL THINKING	EVALUATE ALTERNATIVES USING AGREED-UPON CRITERIA.
	COMMUNICATION & COLLABORATION	DELIBERATE AND REACH CONSENSUS ABOUT THE ISSUE AND GOALS THEY WILL ADDRESS TOGETHER.
	UNDERSTANDING OF COMMUNITY	DELIBERATE ABOUT THE IMPACT AND IMPORTANCE OF DIFFERENT COMMUNITY ISSUES.
2. DESIGNING RESEARCH GUIDELINES (RESEARCH PLAN AND LATER, ACTION PLAN)	EMPATHY	CONSIDERING THE NEEDS OF OTHERS DURING ACTION PLANNING.
	CRITICAL THINKING	MAKING A FEASIBLE, GOAL-ORIENTED PLAN, CONVERTING RESEARCH FINDINGS INTO AN ACTION PLAN.
	COMMUNICATION & COLLABORATION	MAKING DECISIONS COLLECTIVELY.
3. CONDUCTING PRIMARY RESEARCH (INTERVIEWS, SURVEYS)	EFFICACY	GAINING THE KNOWLEDGE NEEDED TO MAKE CHANGE.
	EMPATHY	INTERACTING WITH DIFFERENT PEOPLE AND UNDERSTANDING THEIR PERSPECTIVES AND CONCERNS.
	CRITICAL THINKING	IMPROVISING DURING DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYZING DATA.
	COMMUNICATION	DEVELOPING RAPPORT AND COMMUNICATING WITH DIFFERENT PEOPLE, COMMUNICATING FINDINGS TO AN AUDIENCE.
	UNDERSTANDING AND CONCERN FOR COMMUNITY	LEARNING ABOUT COMMUNITY ISSUES FROM DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES, UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF COMMUNITY PROBLEMS.
4. ORGANIZING RESEARCH MATERIALS	CRITICAL THINKING	JUDGING HOW TO ANALYZE AND ORGANIZE INFORMATION IN LOGICAL WAYS.
	COMMUNICATION	WEAVING INFORMATION INTO COHERENT WRITTEN OR ORAL PRESENTATIONS.
5. CONDUCTING SECONDARY RESEARCH (LIBRARY & INTERNET RESEARCH)	EFFICACY	GAINING THE KNOWLEDGE NEEDED TO MAKE CHANGE.
	CRITICAL THINKING	EVALUATING DIFFERENT SOURCES, SEARCHING FOR AND SELECTING THE MOST RELEVANT INFORMATION, ANALYZING INFORMATION.
	COMMUNICATION	COMMUNICATING FINDINGS TO AN AUDIENCE.
	UNDERSTANDING OF COMMUNITY	UNDERSTANDING THE LARGER SOCIAL CONTEXT OF LOCAL ISSUES.
6. TAKING ACTION	EFFICACY	EXPERIENCING SUCCESS IN MAKING CHANGE.
	EMPATHY	TAKING ACTION TO MEET THE NEEDS OF OTHERS/ THE COMMUNITY.
	CRITICAL THINKING	IMPROVISING BASED ON OBSERVATIONS DURING ACTION.
	COMMUNICATION & COLLABORATION	COMMUNICATING AND COLLABORATING WITH PEERS AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS.
	UNDERSTANDING AND CONCERN FOR	ESTABLISHING OURSELVES AS INTEGRAL MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY, GAINING A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF THE

	COMMUNITY	COMMUNITY DURING ACTION.
7. REFLECTING ON THE PROCESS	EFFICACY	IMPROVING THROUGH REFLECTION.
	EMPATHY	REFLECTING ON HOW OTHERS RESPONDED TO US DURING RESEARCH AND ACTION, ASSESSING WHETHER OUR ACTIONS EFFECTIVELY MET THE NEEDS OF OTHERS/THE COMMUNITY.
	CRITICAL THINKING	REFLECTING ON OUR OWN ACTIONS AND LEARNING, ASSESSING OURSELVES AND OTHERS ACCORDING TO STANDARDS.
	COMMUNICATION	GIVING AND RECEIVING CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK.

Exercise: Imagine that your class has chosen understanding and addressing the problems faced by elderly people in the village as the goal of their Service Learning. Can you think of potential opportunities for developing student knowledge, skills and values through such a project?

Service Learning: Stage by Stage

In this section, seven basic stages of teaching Service Learning are introduced. Each stage is described in detail, with strategies and sample lessons that worked well for RCEF, as well as further questions to explore.

Example: Anti-Smoking Project

Below is an overview of the stages of the Anti-Smoking Project described on page 6.

1. DECIDING ON A THEME	THE TEACHER DISCOVERED THAT HIS STUDENTS WERE VERY INTERESTED IN A SPECIFIC TOPIC IN THEIR SOCIAL SCIENCE TEXTBOOK, AND THIS TOPIC WAS THEN EXPANDED INTO A SERVICE LEARNING UNIT.
2. DESIGNING RESEARCH GUIDELINES	RESEARCH GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS IN DIFFERENT YEARS WERE DESIGNED DIFFERENTLY ACCORDING TO THE STUDENTS' ABILITIES AND THEIR TEACHER'S EXPERIENCE. IN SOME GRADES, THE TEACHER DESIGNED THE RESEARCH GUIDELINES; IN OTHERS, THE TEACHER PROVIDED SOME PRELIMINARY GUIDANCE AND ASKED THE STUDENTS TO CREATE THE REST; IN SOME CASES, THE STUDENTS ACTUALLY DESIGNED THE GUIDELINES THEMSELVES INDEPENDENTLY.
3. CONDUCTING PRIMARY RESEARCH (INTERVIEWS, SURVEYS)	EVERY GRADE VISITED A DIFFERENT VILLAGE TO CONDUCT INTERVIEWS WITH VILLAGERS. STUDENTS WERE DIVIDED INTO GROUPS, WITH EACH GROUP RESPONSIBLE FOR A PARTICULAR AREA OF THE VILLAGE. WITHIN THE GROUPS, STUDENTS TOOK TURNS TO ASK QUESTIONS AND CONDUCT INTERVIEWS, WHILE THOSE WHO WERE NOT CURRENTLY INTERVIEWING TOOK NOTES.
4. ORGANIZING RESEARCH MATERIAL	THE DATA AND INTERVIEW MATERIAL COLLECTED BY THE ENTIRE CLASS WAS AGGREGATED TOGETHER. QUANTITATIVE RESULTS WERE PRESENTED IN THE FORM OF GRAPHS AND CHARTS, AND QUALITATIVE RESULTS WERE PRESENTED THROUGH WRITTEN REPORTS.
5. CONDUCTING SECONDARY RESEARCH (LIBRARY & INTERNET RESEARCH)	AFTER INTERVIEWS, THE STUDENTS REALIZED THAT MANY PEOPLE WOULD LIKE TO QUIT SMOKING, BUT THEY JUST DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO DO THAT. AS A RESULT, WE DECIDED TO LOOK INTO THE BEST METHODS TO QUIT SMOKING AND SPECIFIC WAYS IN WHICH SMOKING CAN HURT ONE'S HEALTH. SOME OF THIS FURTHER RESEARCH WAS DONE ONLINE OR THROUGH INTERVIEWING DOCTORS.
6. TAKING ACTION	AFTER RESEARCH, STUDENTS DRAFTED THEIR OWN SPEECH AND MADE PRESENTATIONS IN THE VILLAGES WHERE THEY CONDUCTED THE INITIAL INTERVIEWS. THEY SHARED THEIR FINDINGS ON SMOKING AND THE BEST WAY TO QUIT SMOKING WITH THE VILLAGERS.
7. REFLECTING ON THE PROCESS	AFTER EVERY PRESENTATION, STUDENTS GATHERED TO DISCUSS WHAT THEY THOUGHT WENT WELL AND WHAT DIDN'T GO AS WELL AS THEY HAD HOPED. THEY DISCUSSED HOW TO IMPROVE THE PROCESS FOR NEXT TIME.

Stage 1: Deciding on a theme

Case Study

A 4th grade teacher discovered that there were many empty plastic bottles lined up on the window sills of his classroom, and every bottle had one or two dead bees in it. It turned out that several boys had become very interested in bees and had trapped some to observe in a bottle. The bees in their bottles died very quickly, but the boys continued to trap new ones. They told the teacher that they wanted to learn how to keep bees, and they hoped their teacher could help them. It is important to note that just because the students have a strong interest in something, this does not mean they will definitely go on to learn anything substantive about it. Without proper guidance from the teacher, their exploration may not go any further than casual entertainment for themselves because they might find it difficult to find the best method to learn more.

At this point, the teacher decided to make this into a Service Learning unit. The teacher found books about bees that the students could consult and took the students to visit local beekeepers nearby. The students interview them about bee behavior and observed their beekeeping techniques firsthand. They took notes and in the end, wrote their own books about bees and beekeeping which were put into the school library to share with other students.

In this case, the theme of the Service Learning project was not just decided by students' interest, it was also prompted by their desire to conduct actual research and learn about a specific practice. As a result, students were very enthusiastic about learning throughout the whole learning unit.

This class did not have a fixed class time. Every interview was initiated by students—they sought out teachers who were available and willing to help them, and visited the beekeepers outside of class time. This theme was chosen by the students, relevant to the local community, and also relatively easy to research. It combined several learning objectives from both Natural Science and Chinese classes. The one difference from a typical Service Learning project though was that the actions taken to learn about and spread knowledge of the bees was more a personal interest of the boys involved, rather than a larger need they identified of others in the local community.

Objectives

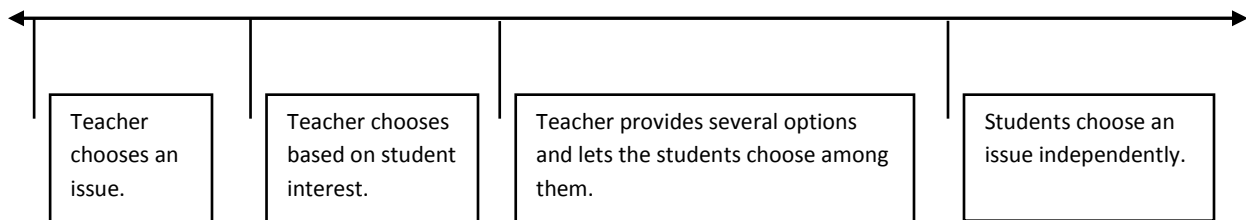
Here are some of the learning objectives that are often relevant for this stage:

- **Independent thinking:** Identifying pressing problems and issues; assessing and comparing the pros and cons of investigating different topics
- **Communication and collaboration:** Communicating opinions in a clear and persuasive manner; learning to listen to others, and reaching consensus with others through deliberation.

Teaching Strategies

1) Student choice

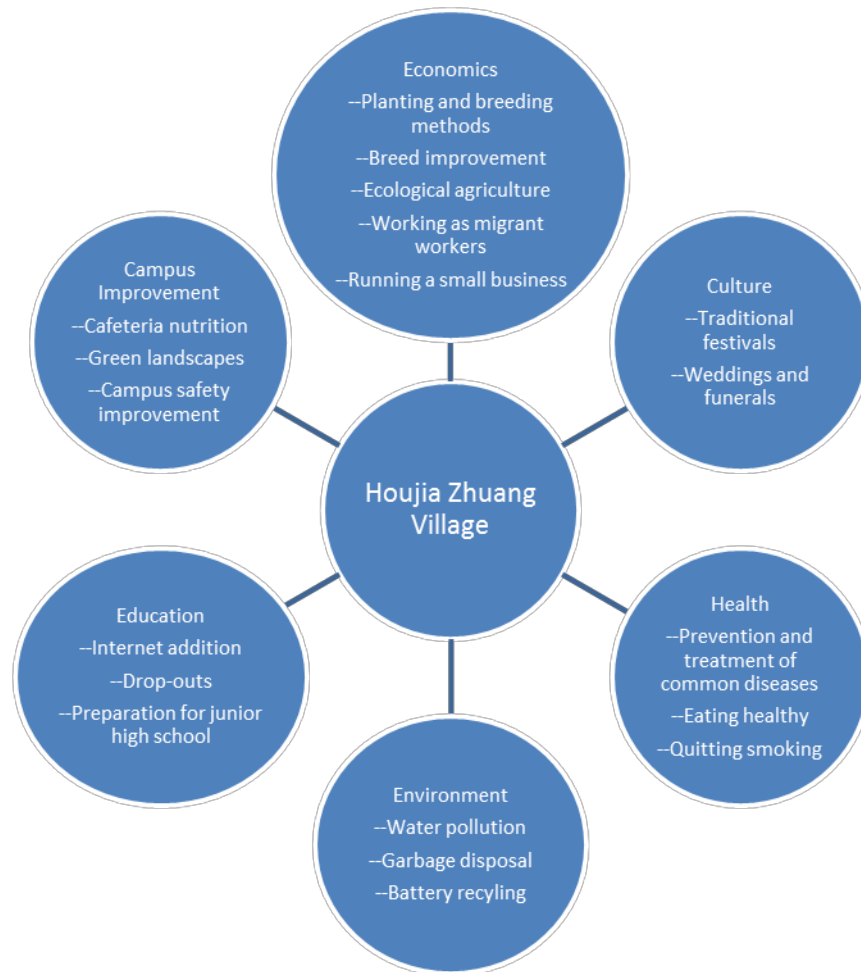
Active participation from students is crucial for Service Learning. Ideally, students should have a voice and participate in decision-making at every step, especially in deciding on the topic of the Service Learning project. Many people think that the theme is either decided by the teacher, or decided by the students. In reality, however, there are many other possibilities between these two extremes, as shown below:



Both students and teachers need practice and skills for students to independently select a topic. Students need to learn to identify problems and concerns in their environments, reach consensus through collective deliberation, weigh the advantages and feasibility of investigating different topics, and so on. Teachers need to be able to facilitate class deliberations effectively, support students in resolving conflicts, and challenge students to make sound arguments in evaluating different ideas, all without restricting students' thinking. This is clearly a challenging task! Therefore, teachers who are new to Service Learning may feel more comfortable starting out closer to the left side of the continuum above, keeping more of the decision-making in their own hands and then gradually shifting the power to students. In the Bee Investigation Case Study above, both the teacher and the students had engaged in Service Learning before. Therefore, the teacher felt more confident in her ability to support students in making decisions very independently.

2) Community relevance

Service Learning projects should enable students to become more aware of the problems and challenges around them, and prompt them to become more caring towards other members of their community. Therefore, we strive to identify possible Service Learning topics that are relevant to the students' community and environment. Rural villages are often full of interesting topics and resources so there should be plenty of opportunities to come up with Service Learning themes that would fit the above criteria. We have outlined some of the possible themes for rural Chinese villages in the diagram below, using the village RCEF worked in (Houjia Zhuang Village) as an example. Of course, there are many more potential choices than the ones we mention here!



Case Study: Sweet Potato Project

Teachers and students from Guan Ai Elementary School in Houjia Zhuang Village conducted a unit on sweet potatoes. Sweet potatoes are a common local agricultural product, and making sweet potato noodles is one of the specialties of the Houjia Zhuang villagers. This made sweet potatoes a potentially suitable subject for our learning unit. First, exploring this topic would help students to develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of a common agricultural product from their hometown. Second, in the process, we could engage participation from other community members. Third, local farmers in the community might be able to benefit from research on how to cultivate premium sweet potatoes, and effective pest control techniques that they might not know about yet.

3) Choosing topics related to local community needs

Service Learning has another important goal, which is to equip students with values and attitudes such as social responsibility, efficacy and self-confidence. To this end, we strive to create opportunities for students to experience the process of taking actions to improve their

community. For example, after doing research on a health-related topic, students can host a seminar for local residents and students from other schools about improving one's health. After exploring local agricultural products, students can recommend more efficient methodologies to local farmers for growing crops, etc.

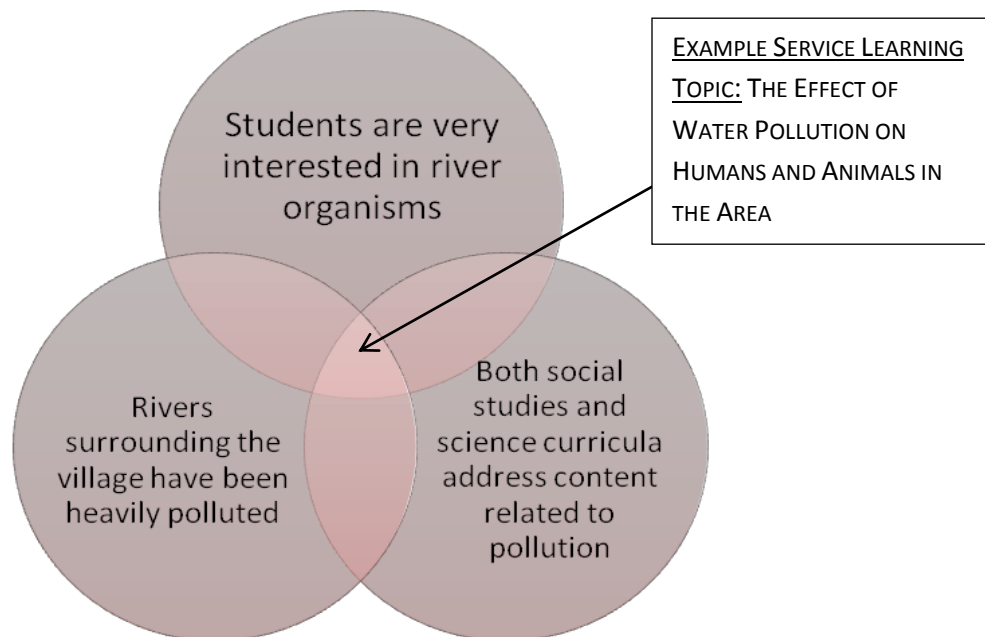
4) *Research feasibility*

In Service Learning, rather than learning from textbooks, students answer questions through their own inquiry and investigation. However, not all topics lend themselves to research that is feasible for students to carry out. Some research might require special equipment, or travel, or touch on sensitive questions. For example, some students have expressed an interest in the issue of alcoholism. However, because this is a taboo topic in rural China that most adults would be reluctant to speak to students about, it would be difficult for them to conduct interviews to understand the nature and scope of the problem. This is not to say that Service Learning should never involve sensitive topics or challenging research, but that teachers and students need to carefully consider the context and feasibility when making a decision.

When students do suggest topics that seem difficult to research, in addition to analyzing the practicality with students, the teacher can guide students in reframing the topic, for example, by focusing on one specific part of a larger issue, or a closely related issue.

5) *Integration with curricular content*

We strive to find themes that students are interested in, which are relevant to the local community *and* which can be integrated with curricular content that students are required to learn. When these three factors converge, teachers not only save time in teaching, but also allow students to learn the content in a deeper, more engaging and more applied way.



Sample Lessons for Stage 1

(Adapted from “My Voice” by Need in Deed)

Reading Newspapers

Objective:

Students will identify community issues that they are concerned about

Preparation before class:

Gather various local newspapers

Procedures:

1. Remind students that the purpose of service learning is to learn about our community and to take action to make a positive difference in our community. The first step is to decide on an issue that we want to focus on. Browsing newspapers is a way to discover issues relevant to our community.
2. Distribute newspapers to the students and ask them to browse and select articles of interest. Instructions for browsing:
 - a. Scan the headlines
 - b. Select a few articles of interest, read the first paragraph and take a look at the accompanying pictures or illustrations
 - c. Select one article that represents a relevant issue that you are concerned about
3. Each group will then pick one article from the articles selected by group members.
4. Each group will answer the following questions about the article they selected:
 - a. What issue does this article discuss?
 - b. Why did you pick this article? How is the issue discussed in this article relevant to our community?
 - c. What have you learned about this issue?
5. Each group will then introduce the article they have picked to the class. Other students may make comments or raise questions.
6. Record the issues reflected in each article for assessment in the next lesson.

Community Walk

Objective:

Students will identify community issues that interest them

Process:

1. Remind students that the purpose of service learning is to learn about our community and to take actions to make a positive difference in our community. The first step is to decide on an issue that we want to focus on. Tell students that we will take a walk in the village. This can help us to discover issues and resources that we may not have paid close attention to before. Remind students to observe with fresh and keen eyes. For example, you might say, *“During our walk, we must be very observant. Try to discover new things that you took for granted and hadn’t noticed before. Observation not only involves watching but can also involve listening. What can you hear? Is anyone chatting or arguing or singing? Do you hear sounds from vehicles or machines? We can also use our noses to smell, use our hands to touch and use our hearts to feel. Do the things that you observe make you feel happy, excited, scared or upset? Why is that? Try to use all of your senses to sense and to discover the characteristics of our village when we are walking.”*
2. Ask the students to bring pen and paper and also remind them of safety precautions for leaving the school.
3. After returning to the classroom, ask each group to make a list of strengths they discovered about their village and a list of problems that they observed.
4. Ask the groups to take turns sharing one asset or strength that they observed without repeating points already made by other groups. Continue to go around until the groups have presented all of the observations that they want to share. Use the same process to summarize any problems that they discovered.
5. Ask the students identify topics from the list that they would be interested in addressing through Service Learning. Record the topics for assessment in the next lesson.

Assessing Possible Themes

The following rubric presents several criteria that students can use to consider the pros and cons of different topics that they are interested in. They can be replaced by other criteria that the teacher or students think are important.

	<u>3 POINTS</u>	<u>2 POINTS</u>	<u>1 POINT</u>	<u>TOPIC:</u> RIVER POLLUTION	<u>TOPIC:</u> SMOKING HABITS	<u>TOPIC:</u> POOR NUTRITION
RELEVANT TO COMMUNITY NEEDS	THE ISSUE IS VERY IMPORTANT AND AFFECTS THE DAILY LIVES OF COMMUNITY MEMBERS.	THE ISSUE IS IMPORTANT AND CAN AFFECT COMMUNITY MEMBERS' LIVES.	THE ISSUE IS NOT VERY IMPORTANT.			
OUR INTEREST LEVEL	OVER HALF OF THE STUDENTS IN OUR CLASS ARE INTERESTED IN THIS ISSUE.	LESS THAN HALF OF THE STUDENTS IN OUR CLASS ARE INTERESTED IN THIS ISSUE.	NOT MANY STUDENTS IN OUR CLASS ARE INTERESTED IN THIS ISSUE.			
COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION	OTHER COMMUNITY MEMBERS CAN PARTICIPATE IN EVERY ASPECT OF THIS UNIT.	OTHER COMMUNITY MEMBERS CAN PARTICIPATE IN SOME ASPECTS OF THIS UNIT.	IT IS VERY DIFFICULT TO INVOLVE OTHER COMMUNITY MEMBERS IN THIS UNIT.			
OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESEARCH	WE HAVE MANY CHANNELS TO RESEARCH THIS ISSUE.	WE HAVE SOME CHANNELS TO RESEARCH THIS ISSUE.	IT IS VERY DIFFICULT FOR US TO RESEARCH THIS ISSUE ON OUR OWN.			
OPPORTUNITIES FOR SERVICE	WE CAN TAKE ACTION TO IMPROVE THE SITUATION.	WE CAN TAKE ACTION BUT WE MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO MAKE A BIG IMPACT	IT IS VERY DIFFICULT TO TAKE ACTION AROUND THIS ISSUE.			
OVERALL SCORE						

Stage 1 Questions to Explore

1. How can we support students in reaching consensus when students are divided and hold strong opinions?
2. In situations where we are unable to give students complete freedom to choose a topic, how can we make the topic interesting and engaging for students so that they are still enthusiastic and motivated to participate?

Stage 2: Designing Research Methodologies

Objectives

Here are some of the learning objectives that are often relevant for this stage:

- **Critical thinking:** Learn to choose the appropriate research method according to the research goal
- **Critical thinking:** Learn to pose valuable questions; evaluate and select questions based on standards
- **Communication and collaboration:** Reach a consensus and group decision via discussion

Teaching Strategies

Students should first clarify the ideal results of their research through thinking and discussion. They should determine which questions they would most like to answer. Then, they can design the best strategy to attain the goal. The following are three common research methodologies:

1) Observation

Many Service Learning units talked about observation. For example, in a project to investigate local water resources, students went to look for wells and rivers in the surrounding area, and drew a water resources map. In a project on their local village agriculture, students observed the production process of sweet potato noodles from beginning to end and then wrote a step-by-step guide.

Determine observation subjects and focus

Taking students out for an observation trip requires sufficient preparation. Students should go with a clear understanding of the goals and focus of the observation. For younger students or those new to Service Learning, teachers may want to hold a more detailed pre-trip discussion. They can even design tables or note-taking devices to use during the observation. If teachers themselves are not familiar with the targets of observation, they may want to conduct the observation themselves first, in order to be able to better assist students in their preparation.

Remind students to take detailed notes during observation

When an observation is in progress, students are generally attracted to things that are particularly obvious or unusual, leading them to miss other subtle yet important details, or to forget to take notes. Teachers can remind student to attend to the details and utilize the opportunity to train their attention to details. During observation, teachers should provide feedback on the notes that students take to help them improve in efficiency and quality.

2) Surveys and Questionnaires

Questionnaires are a quick way to collect a large amount of statistics, yet they have their limitations. Questionnaires are uniform and standard, so we cannot ask different questions to different people, nor can we pursue further according to the answers they provide. Therefore, questionnaires are suitable for situations that require large amount of simple data. For example, in the unit of “left-behind children” (children whose parents have moved to cities to work as migrant workers, leaving their children in the village on their own or with grandparents), students can use questionnaires to survey the family situation of every student in their school, such as the city their parents work in and the months during which they are away.

- ***Designing questionnaires***

When designing questionnaires, students should think about whether their questions are clear and comprehensible. If the targets of their survey are young or lacking in formal education, then students should pay close attention to how they word their questions to make sure that everyone can understand them. In addition, when designing questionnaires, students should consider whether they want their audience to select from multiple choices, or whether they want them to respond to the question in an open-ended way. Multiple choice questions allow for faster data compilation and analysis in the future, while open-ended questions can reflect the target’s thoughts and intentions more accurately.

- ***Disseminating questionnaires***

Before questionnaires are disseminated, students should think about how they want to select their participants. In the example Service Learning project about “left-behind” children, the students want to understand the family situations of those children through a survey. However, there are many students at their school, and we cannot ask every student to fill out the form; therefore, we have to focus our attention on some of the students only. As a result, students should decide how they would choose these survey participants. During the decision-making process, they can think about whether the group should include both male and female students, students in different grades, students who live at school versus students who live at home, etc. In addition, they should also think about how they would explain the purpose of the survey and relevant precautions (if any) to the students they select.

3) Interviews

Almost all service learning projects involve interviews, because one cannot understand a community’s issues without involving the community’s perspective. Effective Service Learning should strengthen the tie between students and other members of their community, and conducting interviews is one way to foster such connections.

- ***Identifying appropriate participants for interview***

- Some Service Learning topics require more specific participants—those might be harder to find and less connected with the students’ own community. In these cases, teachers or students should reach out to people who might know these individuals, and prepare for the interview in advance.

- Ideally, participants for interviews should be of a suitable age, background, and have relevant knowledge of the Service Learning objective. Communicativeness and willingness to share information are also pluses.
- Students should be introduced to each participant's background before the interview. If students have found the participant themselves, then the teacher should discuss the scope of the interview with students and make sure that it serves their learning objective.

- ***What are good interview questions?***

Students who are less experienced with interviews often ask questions that are too broad or questions that are not related to the learning objective. Such questions make it more difficult for students to obtain valuable information through interviews. Therefore, it is very important that the teacher help students to understand what good interview questions are. Here is a list of standards that we have used:

- Relevancy to the specific topic
- Relevancy to the interview subject. Would the subject have knowledge about this question?
- Will the phrasing of the question allow us to flush out details and themes that are of interest to us?

- ***Screening and consolidating interview questions***

Sometimes students can ask the same questions in many different ways, and it is up to the teacher to guide students in consolidating and simplifying the list of interview questions. In doing so, it is important to pay attention to the sequence and logical flow of the questions as well.

- ***Clarification of intentions***

If students have trouble expressing their questions clearly, the teacher can demonstrate how to express the same thoughts in different words in order to make the intention more accessible. Gradually, the teacher should ask students to help each other with this task, and improve their ability to formulate effective questions through practice.

Sample Lessons for Stage 2

Practicing close observation

Objectives:

- Students will realize that they have neglected many details during their observations of daily life.
- Students will practice their close observation skills.

Procedure:

1. Give each student one fruit or vegetable, all of the same kind.
2. Ask students to observe the characteristics of the fruit/vegetable.
3. Collect all the fruits/vegetables and put them on the teacher's desk.
4. Ask students to come up and identify their own fruit/vegetable. This is hard for many students.
5. Tell the students that they have a second chance. Give them back their fruits/vegetables and repeat the steps above.
6. Ask students to share what strategies they used during their second observation.

Creating and Selecting Interview Questions

Objectives:

- Students will know the standards for quality interview questions, and will know how to design an interview outline based on these standards.
- Students will know how to conduct evaluations based on a set of criteria.

Procedure:

7. Remind students of the topic and objectives of the interview.
8. First let students know that a good interview outline is key to the success of an interview, then introduce the standards of quality interview questions:
 - a. Relevancy to the topic
 - b. Relevancy to the interviewee: what questions are the interviewee(s) able to answer?
 - c. Effectiveness at eliciting detailed information about the topic
9. Use several interview questions as examples and ask students to evaluate whether they are good interview questions or not; if not, ask how they can be improved.
10. Ask students to come up with their own interview questions in their groups and ask a recorder in each group to write down these questions. Each group member should come up with at least one question.
11. Students will discuss within their groups which questions are not qualified based on the three standards. These questions will either be improved or removed.

12. Each group will be required to pick one question and report to the whole class. Questions should not be repeated. During this process, if any student or the teacher thinks that certain questions fail to meet the standards that have been mentioned, they can feel free to point that out. Guide students at proper times on how to express their questions more clearly and concisely.
13. Write all questions that get approved by the whole class on the board.
14. Together with the class, puts the questions in a logical order if necessary.

Stage 3: Conducting Primary Research

Objectives

Interviews are one of the best ways to conduct primary research. Here are some of the learning objectives that are often relevant for this method and stage:

- **Communication and cooperation:**
 - Using polite language
 - Working together as a group and having a clear division of labor within the group
- **Understanding one's hometown and developing empathy:** understanding the circumstances and perspectives of community members; building connections with them
- Note-taking methods
- **Flexibility:** adjusting the interview outline appropriately based on the actual interview situation; raising follow-up questions in time
- **Building Confidence**

Note: When guiding students to do interviews, pick one or two training objectives as the main objectives. In the first interview, it is important to teach students to use polite language and how to work as a group. Then, students can be trained to take notes and raise follow-up questions. Students' confidence will be naturally boosted while participating in the activities. When students are particularly shy, the teacher might need to gradually transfer more responsibilities to them and help them build confidence.

Teaching Strategies

1) When students first start doing interviews, have one teacher in each group.

In this way, teachers will be able to see the problems that students encounter in their interviews, and offer them immediate guidance and help. Teacher will also be able to integrate these problems into future interview training. If there are not enough teachers to guarantee one teacher in each group, the teachers need to inquire afterwards about the details of how each group conducted their interview and the problems and difficulties they encountered.

2) Division of labor

Interviews should be conducted as groups and a clear division of labor should be made beforehand. For example, the division of labor could be that each student interviews one interviewee, that the students take turns to ask one question each, or that one student asks questions and another one takes notes. Teachers can make different arrangements based on different situations, but the students have to know how to divide labor and understand that everyone is responsible for the task that is assigned to them.

3) Ways of asking questions

Adopt different ways of asking questions based on the interviewee's characteristics. For example, speak the local dialect when interviewing villagers, use a louder voice when interviewing the elderly since they tend to have hearing issues, use respectful terms when interview the elderly (For example, “ni” and “nin” both means “you” in Chinese, but “nin” is more formal and respectful.)

4) Flexibility: Asking follow-up questions

Without the guidance of a teacher, students might mechanically follow the interview outline and ask questions one by one in the order of their list. Student will learn that if their interviewee has already covered the questions that they planned to ask later, they do not need to ask those questions again. Also, after an interviewee finishes answering one question, if the students do not think the answer is clear enough or a relevant question occurs to them, they can feel free to raise follow-up questions. Teachers need to guide students to do active thinking during an interview instead of just mechanically asking questions.

Sample Lessons for Stage 3

Preparing for the Interview

Objectives:

1. Students learn how to conduct interviews and what they need to pay attention to during an interview
2. Students conduct interviews and practice what they have learned about doing interviews

Procedure:

- First tell the students that they will conduct interviews and as they will be representing their school, they need to take the interview seriously and try to be “professional”.
- Ask students to brainstorm the matters that require special attention in an interview. The teacher will add the ones that students miss and explain with examples:
 - Be polite (Students need to start by first asking people whether they have time for an interview, introduce themselves, and explain the purpose of the interview.)
 - Be safe (Students are required to walk on the right side of the road and not walk away from the team.)
 - Clearly divide labor (Every team picks 2-3 members to take notes, and the rest of them are responsible for asking questions.)
 - Ask follow-up questions (Students should be able to ask other relevant follow-up questions when appropriate. Teachers can give several examples and ask the students to ask follow-up questions for practice.)
- Talk about how to take notes. Share some note-taking methods with the students:

- Be prepared—every student who is in charge of taking notes should bring pens and notebooks with them.
- Take turns—students who are in charge of note-taking should work together and take turns recording answers. In that way, the interviewers can move to the next question without having to wait for one person to finish recording the whole answer.
- Write down the key words—notes are taken as a reminder for future review, so it is unnecessary to write down everything. (The teacher can practice this with students by giving some answers to one question and asking the students to pick which ones should be recorded and which ones can be omitted.)

Stage 3 Questions to Explore

- How can one guide students to ask follow-up questions in a real interview? Despite the demonstration and practice in class, students might not be able to pick up hints from a teacher during a real interview.
- There are times that interviewees speak off-topic. How should we teach the students to react in such situations?

Stage 4: Organizing Research Materials

Case Study

Sweet potatoes are an important agricultural product in Yongji, where RCEF taught many Service Learning projects. In particular, sweet potato noodles are a local specialty. We taught a unit about sweet potatoes at Guan Ai Elementary School, RCEF's partner school, so that the students would realize the important role that sweet potatoes play in the local community. One part of this unit was to study the history of sweet potatoes.

We chose Mr. Hou, an elderly man in the village, as our interviewee. The students organized their notes from the interview with Mr. Hou into an essay. The writing involved in organizing the interview notes was very different from writing that the students had done before, since what they had to start with were questions and answers to questions. To help them get started, we explained the basic structure of an essay and some simple steps.

First, we asked them to write a general description of the interview (Who, What, Where, When, Why, How). We then asked students to try and group the questions and answers into categories, and then decide what order by which they would address these categories in the essay. Our students settled on three categories: the production of sweet potatoes in the 1950s, how sweet potatoes were introduced to Yongji and how people make sweet potato noodles. While the students did not necessarily need to organize their essays exactly according to these categories, this exercise helped them to understand that they needed to group the information in their essay into logical sections. Finally, we asked them to include their thoughts and reflections about the interview in the last part of the essays. During this whole process, teachers can give students some examples of articles written as interviews, and articles written in a more narrative style, to give them a chance to compare and contrast these different writing styles.

Objectives

Here are some of the learning objectives that are often relevant for this stage:

1. **Communication:** Students learn the basic structures of different types of writing and practice writing different types of essays
2. **Critical Thinking:** Students improve their thinking skills including organizing thoughts and sorting and organizing materials

Teaching Strategies

1) Provide Interesting Writing Topics

Before Service Learning, many students either struggled with having nothing to write about or simply copied from books when they had to write essays. There was a lack of storytelling and

emotion in their writings. By contrast, when they wrote essays about their Service Learning experiences, we could tell that they put in their real emotions. The content of their writing was much richer and their interest in writing increased greatly.

2) Improve Students' Writing Skills

Students had to think about how to categorize their notes into different sub-topics, a process which exercised their analytical and inductive skills. They then arranged the order of the sub-topics in the essay in order to make their writing flow logically.

Different writing styles are involved in organizing Service Learning materials, offering students a great opportunity to learn about different types of writing. For example, after the students learned about harvesting sweet potatoes and making sweet potato noodles through interviews and observations, they described these methods in their essays, practicing using detailed and accurate explanations. After observing how local farmers raise pigs, the students wrote narrative-style essays and were asked to describe the pigs' movements and appearances with vivid language.

The writing objectives and topics of these activities often coincide with the objectives of the national Chinese curriculum. For example, there are writing topics like "My Hometown", or ones that ask students to describe animals and plants.

3) Use Post-Its or Strips for Notes

Writing on easily moveable small tabs or strips gives students the flexibility to physically arrange and re-arrange sentences as they work on designing an essay. When students are dissatisfied with an order they chose and want to make changes, they can do so easily without erasing or rewriting everything, which they would have to do if they used only one piece of paper.

4) Organize Quantitative Data

It's not always necessary to choose an essay or writing as the method of organizing data, especially quantitative data gathered. Sometimes, a graphical description is clearer. However, keep in mind the level of statistics and math knowledge that the students have when asking them to do this.

Sample Lessons for Stage 4

Categorizing Information Using Paper Strips

Objective:

Students develop their analytical abilities and learn how to group similar information

Preparation:

- Choose a sample essay, preferably one written by a student from a different Service Learning activity.
- Before class, take all of the facts and pieces of information that students have gathered and write each one on a separate slip of paper. For example, each of the following observations were written on a separate slip of paper in the activity in which our students observed pig behavior:

Baby pigs lean together when they sleep.

Pigs have four feet and there are four toes on each foot. Two toes touch the ground and the other two are around the ankles.

Some pigs scratch themselves.

Duroc pigs are red (there are two of them), Landrace pigs are white, Interbreeds of Landrace pigs and Neijiang pigs have black spots. There are eight spotted pigs.

Procedure:

1. Read the chosen piece of writing aloud to the students. Every time you finish one paragraph, pause and ask the students to summarize the topic of the paragraph. After finishing reading and summarizing the whole piece of writing, hand the students their own reports of an interview or observation, and ask them to separate the information into different categories and organize similar information into the same paragraph.
2. Explain the following steps clearly and specifically before handing out the strips of paper that you have prepared.
3. Ask the students to go through the information on the pieces of paper, discuss with their group members, and then separate strips of paper containing similar information into

piles.

4. When most students are about to finish organizing their piles, ask the students to think of a title for each pile.
5. When all the groups are done, ask one group to share the titles they have come up with and the strips of paper they chose to put into the pile under that title. Other groups can give suggestions for improvement. More than one group can share their work if time allows.
6. Ask the groups to share how they cooperated in this activity. For example, did the cooperation among the group members go well? What methods did they use when sorting the strips of paper into piles?

Variation: Ordering the Paper Strips

After finishing the process described above, ask the students to put the paper strips in each pile in a logical order. The objective is for students to practice their logical thinking ability so that their sentences will turn out to be more coherent and their writing more explicit and clear. This exercise mirrors some of the activity of analyzing essays used in Chinese Language Arts classes.

Analyzing Sample Essays

In the Sweet Potato Project described on page 19, students conducted a group interview at the home of an elderly villager who recounted the history and role of the sweet potato in local culture. Afterwards, when asked to write essays summing up what they learned from the interview, most of the fourth graders wrote narrative-style essays focusing on the incident of the interview rather than expository-style essays summing up the facts and information conveyed through the interview. By contrast, the fifth graders wrote some very good informative, expository essays.

We picked some of the fifth graders' excellent essays and some of the fourth grade essays and read all of them aloud in front of the fourth grade class. We encouraged the fourth graders to bring up the differences they heard between the essays and some of the problems with their own essays. Then they were given a chance to re-write. In this way, the students were usually able to figure out the areas that they needed to improve in without a detailed explanation from the teacher.

Drawing Back-to-Back

Objectives:

- Students realize the importance of detailed descriptions in communication
- Students learn how to write instructions and the standards for evaluating instructional text
- Students will study how to follow instructions and interpret the information on their own

Preparation:

- Pictures of shapes, one for every two students
- Examples of instructions, one for every group
- One instruction booklet written by a student about how to harvest sweet potatoes (as an example)

Procedures:

1. Pair up students. In each pair, one student needs to have a pencil and a book (the book will work as a hard surface to use when they draw later).
2. Ask each pair of students to sit back to back.
3. Explain the task that the students are going to do: “I will give a picture to the student in each pair who does not have a pencil and his/her partner who has a pencil will try to draw this picture without turning around and looking at it. The students who are in charge of drawing can only get information through communicating with their partners. The students who have the pictures cannot turn around to check their partners’ drawings either.”
4. Hand the pictures to students and give them 3 minutes to do this task.
5. When the three minutes are up, ask students to return to their seats and compare their drawings with the original pictures. Usually they are quite different.
6. Ask two or three pairs to explain what problems they had and why. In this step, the students will realize that the speaker must think from the perspective of the listener, thinking about where there might be misunderstandings. You can ask questions like:
 - For the parts that you drew inaccurately, what did your partner tell you about those parts in the activity?
 - What was your understanding at that time while listening to your partner’s description?
 - How might the description or explanation be changed to avoid such misunderstandings?

7. Copy the procedures for harvesting sweet potatoes on the blackboard. Ask students to imagine what misunderstandings a reader who has never harvested sweet potatoes before would have based on these instructions. Students should pick out the parts that can easily cause misunderstanding and think about how to improve them.

Stage 4 Questions to Explore

1. Some activities may not be suitable for younger students so what are some alternatives that would be appropriate for younger children?
2. How can one lead the students to provide “in-depth” descriptions, especially descriptions of details?
3. Is it possible to create other thinking exercises for students who have trouble organizing their thoughts?

Step 5: Secondary Data Research

Case Study

In the Anti-Smoking Project, the students came up with new questions after finishing their primary research. The new questions they had were: What exactly are the effects of smoking? What effective ways are there to quit smoking? The students could not get the answers through interviews and observations in the village and needed to look into research done by others. The teachers invited the village doctor to the school. He was able to answer students' follow-up questions based on his professional expertise. Students were also able to consult information found on the Internet. Since the school did not have enough computers for students though, the teachers printed out articles from the Internet relevant to students' questions, and gave these to them to read, select from, and organize.

Objectives

Here are some of the learning objectives that are often relevant for this stage:

- Students learn how to search for information using a library, the Internet, newspapers, expert opinions, etc.
- Students learn how to select the most important and reliable information from among a large amount of available information.
- Students learn how to organize information and use their own words to compile the selected information into a report.

Teaching Strategies

1) Adjusting teaching objectives according to students' ages and abilities

Searching, selecting and organizing information are challenging tasks and constitute skills important for college-level research. It is necessary to lower the requirements and adjust the teaching objectives for middle school and elementary students. Target one or two objectives in each lesson and ask students to do multiple phases of practice: start with whole-class practice, and then move on to individual independent practice. The lower the grade level of the students, the more help they will need from the teacher. For instance, when practicing information selection with lower grade level students, the teacher can prepare some specific questions to guide the students when they read through the materials. Once they find answers to the questions, they get the information they need. Or, the teacher can let the whole class do this exercise together.

2) Looking for resources in an environment with limited resources

In most rural schools in China, there are few Internet-connected computers for students to use, and there are very few books and magazines available. Given this, the teacher can think

about alternative resources near the school that might be accessible, such as a cultural center, a county library, a long-distance education center, etc. If no resources are accessible to students directly, the teacher may first need to search for the information herself/himself and then give it to the students to select and organize. Students will still acquire important learning skills in the process of information selection and organization.

3) *Relating to Chinese Language Arts curriculum*

The skills that students use in information selection are the same that are required by Chinese Language Arts curriculum exams. When students select information, the teacher can remind the students that the strategies and methods they learn in this process can be applied to solving questions in their Language Arts exams.

4) *Utilizing local information and resource channels*

County Annals: Many county governments have a county annals office that is responsible for the publication of county annals. There is abundant useful information for Service Learning in county annals, such as local maps and records of historical events, as well as statistics about the local economy, education, agriculture, etc. Staff in a county annals office can often recommend other resources.

Cultural Center: Some villages and towns have a cultural center that is in charge of organizing cultural activities and keeping historical records. If the village or town your school is in has a cultural center, it would be a good idea to consult the people who worked there before. They usually have extensive knowledge of local history and might be able to give suggestions on where to look for the information you want.

Bureau of Statistics: The website of the Bureau of Statistics has all kinds of state, province and county statistical information: <http://www.stats.gov.cn/>

Sample Lessons for Stage 5

Selecting Valuable Information

Objectives:

- Students learn how to select the most important and reliable information in an article

Preparation before class:

- The teacher or students select some articles relevant to the topic that is being studied

Procedures:

1. Remind students of the topic that is being studied. For example: “The effects that smoking has on people’s health”.

2. Ask students to come up with questions that need research. For instance, what effects does smoking have on the human body? How severe and widespread are these effects? (For younger students and students who lack research experience, the teacher can prepare some questions and give them to the students.)
3. Ask students to think about key vocabulary related to the questions. For example, illness, cancer, population etc. Ask students to pay attention to these keywords in their subsequent reading.
4. Hand the article to the students. Ask them to read the first paragraph to understand the general content of the article and decide whether the article is relevant to the questions that need to be answered. If yes, they should move on to the following steps. (Since the article was chosen by the students and the teacher based on the topic, it will usually be relevant, but we still want students to confirm this after careful thinking.)
5. Ask students to resume reading the article and highlight the information that answers the questions. (For younger students and students who lack prior experience, the teacher can let the whole class do this together for the first several paragraphs or even the whole article.)
6. Examine the highlighted sentences one by one: what parts provide the information we need and what parts are not directly relevant? The unimportant parts can be removed.
7. When the information selection is done, ask the students to write down the important information.

Stage 5 Questions to Explore

- Some of the materials found on the Internet or in books are either too hard or too easy for the students. How can one find level-appropriate reading materials?
- Some students' reading abilities are less advanced than others. How can we adjust the activities to meet their needs? How can we help improve their reading abilities through these activities?

Stage 6: Service in Action

Case study

At the end of the Anti-Smoking project, students took action by giving presentations in the villages where they had conducted research. Students had experience presenting their learning to others before, but their audience was usually other students. This time, they were presenting to a whole different audience – village residents of all ages –and we had to consider how to best reach them. Each class used a different approach. Third graders drew cartoons, fourth graders made traditional banners, and the fifth graders synthesized useful information in the form of attention-catching posters and calendars. The fourth graders designed vertical banners like the ones that many villagers hang in their homes, but with creative anti-smoking slogans replacing the traditional auspicious sayings. In order to attract villagers to come out to the students' presentations, we first showed a video of a popular traditional opera. During a break in the opera, students gave presentations that informed villagers about the costs of smoking, practical strategies for smoking cessation, and resources such as a free hotline. They also distributed the materials that they designed, which many villagers took and posted on their walls.

Objectives

Here are some of the learning objectives that are often relevant for this stage:

1. **Communication and collaboration:** Applying and sharing learning in diverse ways
2. **Efficacy:** Develop students' sense of efficacy by giving them opportunities to experience making a positive difference in their communities.
3. **Practical skills:** These will differ depending on the specific service project.

Teaching Strategies

1) Different types of service

Taking action for positive change is at the core of Service Learning. The ultimate goal is for students to be active and engaged members of their communities, participate in public affairs and do what they can to make a difference. The service component of Service Learning is an irreplaceable experience for achieving this goal. By engaging in service, students experience a sense of success and come to believe that they have the capacity to have an impact on the world around them. This contributes to their sense of confidence and efficacy. Because of that, we advocate that teachers include a service action component into their projects. At the same time, we are aware that teachers face many constraints in their schools which can make service action impossible. The following are a few types of action that students can engage in. The first three

types are service actions, whereas the last two are less service-oriented but are more practical to implement in some settings.

- ***Direct service***

After researching a community issue, students can directly provide services to address these issues. For example, students may clean up the village every week after researching hygiene issues. Our students noticed that the school and the village lacked athletic equipment and found that this was a concern for a lot of their schoolmates. After learning about what kinds of equipment others would most like to have, they raised funds for building a table tennis table in the school. The table was not only popular among students, but also attracted villagers to come to the school to play.

- ***Raising awareness***

With respect to certain issues, direct provision of services may not be the most effective means of action. Returning to the hygiene example above, collecting rubbish every week is not a sustainable solution if others in the community continue the same habits of littering. Therefore, in addition to or instead of taking part in clean-ups, students might also raise awareness in the community and encourage everyone to contribute to maintaining a hygienic environment. In projects related to agriculture, students may learn methods for growing certain crops or raising certain animals that are more effective and more environmentally friendly than traditional methods. They can share these methods with villagers like the students did in the Qianyuan Zhuang school mentioned earlier.

- ***Advocacy***

Through advocacy, students work to influence policy makers. Because policy makers hold more power and can influence decisions, successful advocacy can lead to deeper and more sustainable change. Again using village hygiene as an example, the underlying problem may not be community members' littering habit but rather the lack of a suitable place for disposing of household rubbish. In this situation, advocating for a village-wide system for more hygienic rubbish disposal would be more effective than both direct action and raising awareness. In Guan Ai School, the students who edited the school newspaper did a special issue on nutrition. One article was about the school cafeteria. They interviewed schoolmates to get their feedback about the cafeteria menu and reported the results in the newspaper to advocate for changes to the menu. In response, the principle organized a meeting with cafeteria staff, student representative and teachers. They all deliberated about changes that could be made in the menu considering the constraints of the budget and seasonal availability of different food. This resulted in a revised menu.

- ***Practical experience***

This method of action allows students to apply their knowledge and immediately implement and practice the skills they've learned. For instance, our students learned how to design chicken coops from a villager. Then, they each drew designs for chicken coops and, based on the best ideas from the different designs, constructed an actual chicken coop. Later, students also learned about how to raise chickens from villagers and bought a few chickens to raise themselves. These practical experiences are not necessarily service-oriented. In this case,

raising chickens was a great learning experience for the students who participated, but it didn't address a need of their class, school or greater community. However, if the aim of the project was to research, experiment with and share more effective methods of raising chickens, then it would be considered a service project.

- ***Creating written or art materials***

Students can share the knowledge that they've learned by writing books, posting them on the internet or via other means. For example, the fourth grade students who researched beekeeping wrote and illustrated books about bees, which were placed in the school library and were very popular among fellow students. This type of action is not likely to have the same sort of impact as direct service, raising awareness or advocacy, but we can still try to think of ways to make their work useful or at least to reach a larger audience. For example, after students researched local culture, art or history, their work can be put online so that more people can have a chance to understand and appreciate their village. They can give copies to the local cultural services office (文化站) and to other nearby schools to share with more students.

2) Choosing actions based on student characteristics

Students may bring different talents, strengths and interests to the action. In the anti-smoking project, different students presented their learning in different ways. While third graders drew cartoons, fifth and sixth graders were expected to incorporate knowledge that they thought would be most useful to villagers into posters and calendars. Students who enjoyed public speaking volunteered to present to villagers.

3) Village presentations

Students are used to giving presentations to their classmates. Presenting to the larger community brings the additional challenge of gathering villagers together to participate. One easy way of reaching everyone is asking the village head to make an announcement over the village broadcast system. They may even allow students to make the announcement themselves. You can also take advantage of village activities such as movie showings or dance performances. Schools can also organize an activity for the purpose of bringing villagers together. In the anti-smoking campaign, we showed a traditional opera that we knew is popular among villagers and successfully attracted many villagers.

4) Educative action

A lot of common service activities are not educative. Some schools take students on one-time visits to elderly homes to bring presents or give a performance. As teachers, we should consider: Will students develop new insights into the situations and perspectives of the elderly through this activity? Will they learn or apply new skills? The action component in Service Learning should be integrated with learning. Students decide what action to take based on their understanding of the issue after researching it and further deepen their learning through the actions.

Stage 6 Questions to Explore

How can we strike a balance between service that is feasible for students and will give them a sense of success with service that will make significant and sustainable impact?

Stage 7: Reflection

Case Study

Towards the end of the Anti-Smoking project, students gave oral presentations to the residents of the villages where they did their primary research. After each presentation, the ten or so students who participated would provide feedback on their performance and discuss any areas that needed improvement. Some students shared their methods for overcoming their fear of presenting, such as looking at the lights ahead as opposed to directly looking at the audience. They also noted some suggestions for improvement. For example, they used to stand right in front of the projector screens, which not only obstructed villagers' views to the PowerPoint presentations but also caused themselves to be subjected to the glaring projector lights. As a result, they chose a different position to stand in and arranged for a teacher to provide appropriate lighting using a flashlight. Another student suggested it was better if teachers did not announce at the beginning of the presentations that free materials would be distributed to attendees because it would occupy the villagers' attention and distract them from focusing on the content of the presentations.

Objectives

Here are some of the learning objectives that are often relevant for this stage:

- **Critical thinking:** Identifying problems
- **Confidence:** Improved self-confidence through reflection.
- **Communication:** Listening to suggestions from others, politely providing constructive feedback to others

Teaching Strategies

1) Reflecting throughout each unit

Reflections should not be left to the end of a project, but should be conducted throughout each stage of the project. For example, following a class in which students collaboratively created a set of interview outlines, they can reflect on whether they effectively communicated their opinions and ideas during the discussions and whether they effectively listened to other people's thoughts. Once they complete the interviews, they can also reflect on whether the group has collaborated during the interview, whether they employed the interviewing skills previously developed, and whether there are outstanding questions that were not fully understood and require further exploration.

2) From reflections to plans

Reflections should be closely linked to next steps. If students observe any areas of improvement while doing their self-reflections, they should remind themselves of these areas before they do the same task again, and they need to reflect once again after their second attempt at the same task. Based on the reflections, when students discover issues for further investigation or action, relevant research or action plans should be created promptly. If reflections do not effectively lead to next steps, students will form the opinion that reflections are merely formalities, and it will be difficult to develop students' habits to make improvements from reflecting.

Students will also engage in reflections after each project is over. When just starting out with Service Learning in a school, we recommend that teachers do reflections as a group and also conduct reflections across two or three different grade levels. As such, upon the completion of trial at the one year level, teachers can discuss and identify issues, which can then be addressed when implementing the trial at a different year level. This will help teachers to quickly develop their own abilities.

3) Provide students with the means to give and receive feedback

Some students may appear disrespectful when making suggestions. Some students may become upset when receiving negative feedback. These are common issues arising during the reflection session.

To prevent these issues, teachers need to explain to the students prior to the reflections the purpose of the exercise and engage the students to make rules for the reflection session together. During the course of this process, teachers may introduce some methods of giving or receiving feedback. Methods of giving feedback may include the following: when making suggestions, focus on the way the recipient has done things rather than on the recipient, use respectful language and tone, give constructive feedback that specifies ways to improve, use polite language, such as "if it were me, I would ..." and so on. Methods for receiving feedback may include the following: do not interrupt the other person, only respond when the other person has finished speaking, quietly reflect on whether the suggestion given is reasonable, ask for examples of opinions given, and invite the other person to suggest specific ways of improvements.

4) Celebrate students' achievements

Reflections are not limited to areas for improvement, but should also provide an opportunity to celebrate achievements of the students. There are different ways to celebrate students' achievements, such as displaying students' work in the schools or village to point out students' progress or holding a celebration upon the completion of a project and so on.

Sample Lessons for Stage 7

Formats for reflections include:

- Group or class discussions
- Self assessment or feedback between peers using forms
- Writing diaries
- Completing questionnaires
- Writing notes to stick onto walls
- Holding celebration parties

Regardless of the form, teachers will give students leading questions. Common questions to use in reflections include:

- What do you think you have done best?
- What do you think the most important area for improvement is?
- From the last reflection, we identified that _____ is an area for improvement. Do you think you have improved in this area?
- How did our group perform together?
- Was there anything that happened in this activity that was unexpected?
- What was most memorable part of this activity?
- What did you learn?
- During the course of this activity, what issues did you find you would be interested in researching further?
- What do you think the next steps should be?

Stage 7 Questions to Explore

- Quite often, students' reflections may cover only issues on the surface, such as "whether or not the person who was speaking projected their voice". How do you guide students towards deeper reflections?
- When students are providing feedback to each other, how do you guide students to participate on the basis of dealing with respect and a mindset of learning from one another?

How do we assess Service Learning?

We can think about service-learning assessment on two levels. The first level is assessment of individual service-learning projects or specific activities within a project. This is something that teachers are usually responsible for and integrate into their projects. The second level is assessment of the whole service-learning program of a school or organization. This assessment is focused on the overarching goals that a school or organization has for all of its service-learning projects regardless of the theme. For RCEF, this means assessing whether our six goals (in the pyramid on P.4) has been met in the different classes and schools that we work with. This level of assessment may be more long-term and large-scale than the first level.

Level one: Assessment of individual projects and activities

Each step of your service-learning project should have specific objectives, and assessment should be tied to these objectives. Let's go back to the example of writing an open letter to the village. My goal for that activity is for students to learn to write persuasively and specific skills I hope they master are using sound evidence, raising vivid examples and making emotional appeals. One way to assess student learning in this activity would be to create a rubric based on these three techniques. The rubrics should be shared with the students before they write so that they have a clear understanding of my expectations. When they are finished, each student could assess themselves in addition to receiving assessment and feedback from peers and the teacher based on the same rubric. In addition, assessment of this activity can also take place during reflection as students reflect on what they learned, how villagers responded to their letters and what they hope to do better in the future.

At the end of a project, students should assess their own performance in terms of the effectiveness of their service, what they have learned, and their participation in the process. In addition to assessing students in these three areas, teachers also reflect on their own growth. The following pages present three sample assessment tools adapted from *The Complete Guide to Service-Learning* by Cathryn Berger Kaye¹¹.

Level two: assessment of school or organizational programs

This assessment is focused on goals that the school or organization has for all service-learning projects. These are higher level goals, such as strengthening students' civic efficacy, that are integrated into each and every service-learning project in the whole school or organization. This level of assessment takes place regularly over the course of several years because the achievement of these large goals is a long-term and ongoing process.

When an organization is just starting to experiment with service-learning, it may decide to focus on supporting teachers to develop effective practices, and give teachers some time to learn the new approach before expecting to see changes in student outcomes. During this time, it is important to assess service-learning instruction in order to identify the areas in which teachers need more professional development support. This type of assessment is called program efficacy

¹¹ See Kaye, C. B. (2010). *The Complete Guide to Service Learning: Proven practical ways to engage students in civic responsibility, academic curriculum, & social action*. Minneapolis, MN: Free spirit Publishing.

assessment. Program efficacy assessment should be based on the principles of effective practice, and looks at the extent to which these principles were demonstrated by teachers. While self-evaluation is an important component of assessment, teachers themselves may not be aware of the strengths and weaknesses in their own teaching, or of how students experience service-learning projects. Therefore, program efficacy assessment should include different sources of information such as students, the teachers themselves, and program coordinators. The assessment may draw on project materials (such as examples of student work, and student and teacher project assessment forms), student surveys (see Part F of the “Service-learning Program Evaluation – Student Survey”), observations of service-learning activities and interviews with students and teachers. Using both quantitative and qualitative research methods allows us to get a fuller picture so that we can see larger trends, quantifiable results and the nuanced experience of different participants.

Our ultimate purpose for implementing service-learning programs is to make an impact on students. A school or organization’s educational goals for service-learning should inform its assessment of student outcomes. As in the case of program efficacy assessment, student outcome assessment should include multiple sources of information, and multiple forms of data collection. It is important to start collecting data as soon as possible – ideally even before the program begins – so that comparisons of student outcomes before and after their participation can be made. Furthermore, in order to determine whether the student outcomes can be attributed to the service-learning program, it is best to collect data from a similar group of students who have not participated in the program. If participating students show gains in a certain area, but students who have not participated show similar gains, then the gains are likely not to be a result of the service-learning program. In RCEF, the student outcome goals that we assess are students’ civic efficacy, empathy, thinking skills, communication & collaboration skills, and understanding of and concern for the community. The following is a sample survey for measuring student outcomes based on RCEF goals¹².

¹² This survey was adapted from Measures of Civic Outcomes for Elementary School students (CIRCLE), Civic Responsibility Survey (Furco A., et al.), Sense of Community Survey (Chavis D. M., et al.) and Political Engagement Project Survey (Carnegie Foundation).

Teacher Assessment for Service Learning: Part One

Service-learning Project: _____

Respond to the questions that are relevant to your service-learning activities.

Student Learning

- Were the defined content and skills objectives met?
- Were there any unforeseen outcomes?
- Did students show initiative or develop leadership skills?
- Were students able to reflect and place their experience in the larger context of community or society in general?
- Could students identify both their cognitive and affective growth?

Impact of the Service

- Were students able to explicitly state the need and purpose for their service efforts?
- What contribution was made?
- How did the service help or hinder community improvement efforts?
- Is the partner organization satisfied with the collaboration?
- Have new and meaningful relationships been formed?
- Were planned service programs, activities, or products completed?

Process

- How did this project affect or change how teachers teach and how children learn?
- How effective was project planning?
- What are your ideas for overall improvement?
- In future activities, how can students take greater ownership?
- How can community partnerships be improved or strengthened?

Teacher Assessment for Service Learning: Part Two

Service-learning Project: _____

For each stage of the project, identify what methods were used and give examples of how RCEF goals as well as elements of effective practices were incorporated.

Stages of Service-Learning

Elements of Effective Practices

Preparation

- Research
- Reading
- Field trips
- Interviews
- Other:

Student voice

Meaningful service

Curriculum integration

Intellectually challenging reflection

Action

- Direct service
- Indirect service
- Research
- Advocacy
- Other:

Sufficient duration

Strengthening relationships

RCEF Goals

Strengthening efficacy

Reflection

- Discussion
- Journals
- Role play
- Others:

Enhancing empathy

Developing critical thinking skills

Improving collaboration & communication skills

Demonstration

- Presentation
- Performance
- Article
- Other:

Understanding community issues

Developing appreciation and concern for the community

Student Self-Evaluation

Name: _____ Date: _____

Service-learning Project: _____

Learning

- What information did you learn in your preparation and service?
- What skills did you develop through the activities?
- How did this project help you to better understand ideas we have been studying in other classes?
- Through this service-learning project, what did you learn about:
 - yourself?
 - working with others, including people in your class and in the community?
 - your community?
- How will you use what you learned in this experience?

Service

- What need were you fulfilling through your service effort?
- What contribution did you personally make?
- What overall contribution did your class make?
- How did your service affect the community?

Process

- How did you and other students participate in project planning?
- In what ways did you make decisions and solve problems?
- Were there any differences between the initial project plans and what you actually did?
Why?
- What ideas do you have for improving any part of the project?

Service-learning Program Evaluation – Student Survey

Part A (Civic efficacy and responsibility)

1. Suppose you found out about a problem in your school that you wanted to do something about. Please rate how well you can do each. (Scale: 1 = I cannot do this, 2 = It would be hard, 3 = I can do this, 4 = I can do this very well.)

- ___ I would be able to create a plan to address the issue.
- ___ I would be able to get people to care about the problem.
- ___ I would be able to organize and run a meeting.
- ___ I would be able to make a public speech.
- ___ I would be able to find and analyze research related to the issue.
- ___ I would be able to express my views in front of a group of people.

2. Please say whether you disagree or agree with each sentence. Circle the number that best represents your answer. (1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Agree, 4=Strongly Agree)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
a. I pay attention to news events that affect the community	1	2	3	4
b. Doing something that helps others is important to me.	1	2	3	4
c. I like to help other people, even if it is hard work.	1	2	3	4
d. I know what I can do to help make the community a better place.	1	2	3	4
e. Helping other people is something everyone should do, including me.	1	2	3	4
f. I feel like I can make a difference in the community.	1	2	3	4
g. Everyone should pay attention to the news, including me.	1	2	3	4

Part B (Empathy)

Please say whether you disagree or agree with each sentence. Circle the number that best represents your answer. (1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Agree, 4=Strongly Agree)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I try to help when I see people in need.	1	2	3	4
2. When I make a decision, I try to think about how other people will be affected.	1	2	3	4
3. I try to be kind to other people.	1	2	3	4
4. I apologize when I hurt someone's feelings.	1	2	3	4
5. I want to help when I see someone having a problem.	1	2	3	4

Part C (Communication & Collaboration)

1. To solve most problems, I have to learn how to work with others.	1	2	3	4
2. I can learn more from working on group projects than from working alone.	1	2	3	4
3. I like working with other people on group projects.	1	2	3	4
4. When I see something that needs to be done, I try to get my friends to work on it with me.	1	2	3	4
5. I am pretty good at organizing a team of kids to do a project.	1	2	3	4
6. If I'm the leader of a group, I make sure that everyone in the group feels important.	1	2	3	4
7. I feel like I can stand up for what I think is right, even if my friends disagree.	1	2	3	4
8. I try to think how someone else would feel before I say something.	1	2	3	4

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4
9. I make sure I understand what another person is saying before I respond.	1	2	3	4
10. When I am listening to someone, I try to understand what they are feeling.	1	2	3	4
11. I try to think before I say something.	1	2	3	4
12. I summarize what another person said to make sure that I understood.	1	2	3	4
13. If friends are fighting, I try to get them to talk to each other and stop fighting.	1	2	3	4
14. If a friend is mad at me, I try to understand why.	1	2	3	4
15. I know how to avoid a fight when I need to.	1	2	3	4
Part D (Thinking)				
16. It is important for me to get information to support my opinions.	1	2	3	4
17. I am able to give reasons for my opinions.	1	2	3	4
18. I keep my mind open to different ideas when planning to make a decision.	1	2	3	4
19. When a problem arises, I try to think about different ways of solving it.	1	2	3	4
20. When I make a decision, I think about what might happen afterwards.	1	2	3	4
21. I am good at weighing the pros and cons of different options before deciding.	1	2	3	4
22. It is important to gather information from different sources before making a decision.	1	2	3	4
23. I am good at recognizing the difference between facts and opinions.	1	2	3	4

Part E (Sense of Community)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I think my community is a good place for me to live.	1	2	3	4
2. I know many people in my community.	1	2	3	4
3. I feel at home in my community.	1	2	3	4
4. Very few of my neighbors know me.	1	2	3	4
5. I care about what my neighbors think of my actions.	1	2	3	4
6. I have influence over what my community is like.	1	2	3	4
7. If there is a problem in this community people who live here can get it solved.	1	2	3	4
8. It is very important to me to live in this particular community.	1	2	3	4
9. I expect to live in my community for a long time.	1	2	3	4
10. I am proud of my community.	1	2	3	4
11. I have role models in my community.	1	2	3	4

Part F

School: _____ Teacher: _____

Grade: _____ Gender: _____

How often do you participate in service-learning activities?

___ once a month ___ twice a month ___ once a week ___ several times a week

Think of the service-learning projects you've participate in this year. How long did they last?

___ a week or less ___ a month or less ___ a semester or less ___ more than a semester

Do you have a say in planning and carrying out service-learning projects?

___ always ___ often ___ sometimes ___ hardly ever

Did the service-learning projects help your learning in other subjects?

___ always ___ often ___ sometimes ___ hardly ever

Did you get to know people in the community better through service-learning projects?

___ yes ___ yes, but not very well ___ no

Did you get to collaborate with your classmates in service learning projects?

___ always ___ often ___ sometimes ___ hardly ever

Conclusion

Service Learning can be an amazing experience for both students and teachers. Because this approach is so drastically different from what we normally do in school, it brings many challenges but also many new opportunities to grow. We continuously surprise ourselves with how we can stretch ourselves as teachers and are constantly surprised by what students can accomplish. Sometimes students who usually do not stand out in class emerge as new leaders because different types of work and talent are valued.

Teachers who are considering trying Service Learning for the first time should not expect everything to go perfectly. Service Learning involves new ways of teaching, learning and working together. Give yourself and your students sufficient time to learn and adjust. You will surely face some difficulties along the way, but don't be intimidated or discouraged. The most important thing is to get started and make small goals for improvement. Constantly reflect on your practice and let these reflections guide your next steps towards meeting your goals.

RCEF appreciates opportunities to share and learn together with other educators. If you start practicing Service Learning and would like to discuss problems you encountered, successes you have experienced or new ideas you have developed, please email us at info@ruralchina.org. We wish you the best of luck as you embark on the rewarding endeavor of learning and service with students!