



Rural China Education Foundation Annual Report 2011



乡村教育
促进会



RURAL CHINA
EDUCATION FOUNDATION



Dear RCEF Supporters,

Our major project in 2010-2011 was spinning off a domestic Chinese non-profit organization to deepen and develop RCEF's work in Yongji, Shanxi Province. Called the Starfish Rural Youth Cultural Research Center, this domestic Chinese NGO is run by former RCEF Chinese staff and RCEF-trained teachers. We are excited to share the extraordinary work they are doing in the following pages.

RCEF also spent the year summarizing and sharing our educational experiences from three years in rural schools. We gave a series of presentations to other NGOs and rural teachers and produced the RCEF Service Learning Handbook which demonstrates how to integrate academic learning and meaningful service to the community.

Thank you for your support and interest in RCEF's work. With your help, we can continue to invest in teacher training and professional development that is so essential to improve the quality of education in rural China.

Sincerely,
Diane Geng, Wei Ji Ma, Sara Lam
Co-Founders



RCEF spins off Starfish, a local Chinese non-profit organization to run the program we started in Yongji, Shanxi Province.

Select RCEF-trained village teachers are promoted to full-time curriculum teachers to further develop innovative teaching methods in Shanxi Province.

RCEF spreads the philosophy and practical case studies of service learning teaching in rural China through conferences and a new handbook.



Starfish Program Branching Out



The Starfish Center is carrying on the work that RCEF started in Yongji, Shanxi Province.

In September 2010, RCEF helped its mainland Chinese staff members to establish a new domestic Chinese non-profit entity called the Starfish Center. Starfish is carrying on and further developing the work that RCEF started at public schools in Yongji, Shanxi Province. RCEF is currently incubating Starfish and its program, which follows RCEF's approach of providing year-round, on-site staff members who act as partners to rural teachers in planning, teaching, and reflecting on the development of primary school reading classes. Through reading and discussing extracurricular books, students begin to explore social issues relevant to their own lives and surrounding environment. They exercise their academic, social, and personal skills by solving problems and working as a team.

Partner Schools

This year, the Starfish program worked intensively in two schools in Yongji, Shanxi Province: Dong Wu Xing Primary School and Xiaochao Primary School.



Students participate in a group discussion during class.

Dong Wu Xing Primary School

Dong Wu Xing Primary School has 130 students. They come from three surrounding villages which together have a population of 4,000-5,000 people. The farmers there grow mostly cotton, and many have also left to do migrant work in cities. The village head is a strong supporter of local education and encourages the principal to focus on improving the quality of education. Like most children in rural China, the students at Dong Wu Xing have little access to books beyond their school textbooks.

RCEF and Starfish worked with the school principal to bring extracurricular books to the school and establish regular class periods for reading. The Starfish teachers used this time to expose students to a variety of books and teach them different reading strategies. They also constructed "Book Corners" in the classrooms so that students could choose their own books to read. This helped to develop children's interest in reading for pleasure.



Students read together at the library in Xiaochao Primary School.

Xiaochao Primary School

Xiaochao Primary School educates over 200 students in six grades. Many of them are “left behind children” whose parents have migrated to cities to work. Most of Xiaochao’s teachers live in the surrounding villages and have taught at the school for a decade or more.

While its test scores consistently rank at the top of the township, Xiaochao wanted to add more enriching activities to its curriculum and bolster students’ well-rounded development. RCEF and Starfish helped Xiaochao School to set up a library and provides teachers to teach Reading, English, and Music classes.

Starfish curriculum teachers receive training twice a week from staff trainers who research and design the lesson plans, observe and film classes, evaluate the teachers, and help them to improve. The books used in the lessons are chosen around themes that are close to students’ lives such as village history and family relationships. Students also have a chance to pick out books of interest from teacher recommendations and share their feedback about the books with their peers.

Lesson themes included “Village Changes over the Past 30 Years,” and “The Needs of Left-Behind Children and Elderly.” Teachers guided students to read stories and other material that helped them to think about social issues in preparation for doing their own research and action project in the community.

Caring for Left Behind Children and Elderly

A Curriculum Example



A Starfish curriculum unit focused on the lives and needs of left-behind children and elderly.

Migration from rural to urban areas is a common phenomenon in China. However, when rural adults migrate to cities to work, they often leave behind young children and elderly parents. There are an estimated 20 million such children and elderly in rural China, and around 50% of the children in Starfish's program fit this description. Their lives and needs were the focus of a Starfish curriculum unit for third- and fourth-graders.



Step One: Reading

First, teachers selected age-appropriate books and a short film to get students thinking about this topic from various perspectives.



Step Two: Exploring

Then the students interviewed left-behind children and elderly people in their villages about problems in their lives. They discussed which problems they could personally work on alleviating, settling on three issues: academic difficulties faced by left-behind children whose parents aren't home to help with homework, poor personal hygiene of younger children whose grandparents are too frail to help them bathe, and the heavy workload of the elderly who must farm and do household chores.



Step Three: Applying

Students decided to form small groups in each village so older students could help younger children whose parents were gone or whose grandparents were overworked. Each group made plans, including when and where to meet, and elected a group leader to handle coordination. In their home visits, program teachers found that students' guardians strongly approved of this initiative.



Promoting Service Learning

Civic Responsibility In Community and School

Over the past year, RCEF has also been busy promoting service learning teaching methodology amongst teachers and NGOs that work with rural children. Service learning is an educational approach that cultivates civic responsibility by integrating academic learning and personal growth with meaningful service to the community. 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 learning and action throughout the process.

A new RCEF handbook on service learning presents this teaching methodology in detail along with practical examples of how RCEF teachers have applied it in rural China. We have also produced a series of videos showcasing RCEF Service Learning projects. They include:

- Anti-Smoking Investigation in Three Villages
- Water Sources Investigation
- Snail Investigation
- Village Changes Over 30 Years





"I need this kind of education"

**-Ms. Bi Yunmei
Participant in RCEF
Teacher Sharing Meeting**

Conferences and Trainings

Sharing Knowledge

Throughout the year, RCEF staff and teachers traveled to southwest China to share RCEF's philosophy and teaching with more than a dozen rural development organizations.

On April 2, RCEF's Co-Director of Development, Nikita Guo, spoke in a panel at the Asia Business Conference at Harvard Business School. The panel was focused on sustainable development in Asia and RCEF's philosophy and work were well-received by the audience.

In July and August, rural teachers from Shanxi, Sichuan, Anhui, Yunnan, and Gansu Provinces came to a RCEF Teacher Sharing Meeting. The guest teachers observed RCEF teachers guide local village children in a project to investigate and educate their community about the prevalence and health effects of cigarette smoking.

"I've never been to a training like this before," said Ms. Ma Zhongyi, a second grade teacher from the mountains of Sichuan Province. "This training allowed us to participate in every step of the teaching. I want to attend more trainings like this where I can exchange experiences with people who are passionate about teaching."

Ms. Bi Yunmei, a first grade teacher from a Yi minority village in Yunnan Province said, "We didn't just learn teaching strategies or techniques, we learned how to look at society--to explore and analyze it using our own actions and strengths. I need this kind of education, which involves a whole new way of thinking and talking about values."

Statement of Financial Activities

September 1, 2010 to August 31, 2011

REVENUE

Individual Contributions	\$47,667
Grants	\$14,749
Other	\$1,689
Total Revenue	\$62,416

EXPENSES

Administrative Salaries and Benefits	\$21,092
General Operating Expenses	\$4,569
Integrative Rural Education Program	
Books and Teaching Materials	\$496
Rural Teacher Professional Development	\$12,888
Service Learning Training	\$4,326
Filming & Documentation of Teaching	\$410
Program Evaluation	\$817
Rural School Support Grants	\$2,915
Rural Teachers, Trainers, and Staff Salaries & Benefits	\$37,922
Program Administration	\$4,924
Program-related Travel	\$5,119
Total Expenses	\$95,479

Change in Net Assets	(\$31,374)
Net Assets Beginning of Year	\$245,236
Net Assets End of Year	\$213,862

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

Checks made payable to "Rural China Education Foundation" can also be sent to:

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