



SUPPORT EDUCATION IN RURAL CHINA PROGRAM SERIES

认助中国乡村教育项目系列

2012 Annual Report



Students learn about water pollution and experiment with water purification methods at the ESS science camp in No. 1 Middle School, in Hezheng County, Gansu Province – one of 16 summer camps sponsored by ESS in 2012. More on page E-7.

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Education and Science Society
P.O. Box 9525, McLean
Virginia 22102-0525 USA
web: www.esscare.org

Education and Science Society, Inc. (ESS) is a non-profit, non-political educational organization, registered as a 501(c)(3) charitable organization in the State of New York. Its missions are to promote understanding between the peoples of the United States and China, and to promote human and social development in rural China by raising literacy levels and improving the quality of education.

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Website

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Josephine Pun

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Yorke, Burke & Lee, CPA/PA

The ESS Board of Directors holds regular meetings every quarter; The SERC Executive Committee holds regular meetings bimonthly.

SUPPORT EDUCATION IN RURAL CHINA (SERC) PROGRAM SERIES

2012 Annual Report

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Foreword

Dr. Mu-Ming Poo, ESS President

Confucius once said, “A friend coming from afar brings the utmost joy.” This was indeed the case when Fang Ming visited me in Shanghai some time ago. I have known Ming since the “Bao-Diao” movement in the 1970s, but we have not met again for decades. As a professor of chemical engineering at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology for nearly twenty years, Ming has been a staunch supporter of ESS, and has made significant contribution to ESS fundraising activities in Hong Kong. Recently retired, he is embarking upon a new career -- promoting science education for middle school children in China. His colleagues and students in Hong Kong have developed simple equipment kits, designed to be assembled and operated by middle school children to monitor several key air pollutants. His ambitious plan is to set up thousands of such student-operated air pollution monitoring stations across China to collect long-term data on changes in the air quality in different parts of the country. The project will help to foster the interest of middle school students in learning science and doing hands-on experiments, as well as enhance their awareness of and involvement in environmental issues. What a marvelous dream!

Many people I have come to know through ESS over the years are dreamers like Fang Ming. In the same vein as Martin Luther King’s dream, our dreams are remote yet so magnificent and appealing, leading us forward to strive for their fulfillment throughout our lifetime. I was particularly touched when I participated in a three-day science camp in Qianshan County in Anhui Province last summer. The summer camp program was initiated five years ago as a collaborative project between ESS and the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS). It has since become an annual event organized by CAS graduate students, including our students from the Institute of Neuroscience (INS) in Shanghai.* After three days of total immersion in the Qianshan camp activities, designed to inspire eager and intelligent rural middle school children to learn and to explore science, no one came away unaffected. INS students have subsequently launched a formal volunteer program in Shanghai to sustain and expand the summer camp activities in the rural areas in China, with the slogan: “Wire Together, Fire Together”. For many of us working in research institutions, whether professors or students, the program keeps us in touch with the reality and the needs of our society. It is our dream that such camp activities will spread like wild fire across the country, their content and coverage becoming further enriched and diversified.

Similarly, ESS has continued to expand its summer camp programs in the rural areas in China, having sponsored 35 camps in 13 provinces since 2009. Science and environmental issues were the main themes in many of these camps, while several other camps focused on music, reading/writing skills, or a blend of various activities. The camp programs have benefited not only the rural students but also the volunteer instructors. Having spent weeks preparing the camp activities and closely interacting with the children, the volunteers have deepened their understanding of and concern for the rural communities. The program is like a natural incubator for our next generation of ESS volunteers, furthering our dreams for quality education in rural China. It is our hope that many more college and graduate students from the cities in China will become volunteer instructors in the ESS summer camps.

Like the summer camp programs, many ESS activities have been sustained by the selfless dedication of our volunteers and the unfailing support of our sponsors and friends. In order to shape our evolving programs in the coming years, we will continue to seek input and feedback from all the people who are concerned about education in rural China, and who care about the future for our rural children. With deep appreciation, we will try to make the best use of every dollar we have raised, as we have been doing over the past 25 years.



ESS summer camp volunteers from Northwest Normal University took time to visit local rural families in Dangchang, Gansu Province.

* Dr. Mu-ming Poo is Director of the Institute of Neuroscience, the Chinese Academy of Sciences, in Shanghai.

SERC Program Series 1988-2012 Major Results and Activities at a Glance

SERC Series I: Providing Reading Material and Information Resources		
◆ Rural School Library (RSL)	(since 1989)	5,474 RSLs
◆ Rural Public Library (RPL)	(since 1988)	47 RPLs
◆ Rural Multimedia Information Center (RMIC)	(since 2007)	19 RMICs
SERC Series II: Improving Teaching and Learning in Rural Schools		
◆ Basic Education Conferences/workshops for rural teachers - Jointly held with provincial/municipal institutions	(since 1993)	48 conferences
◆ Summer Camps (Science)	(since 2009)	27 camps
◆ Summer Camps (Music and General Activity)	(since 2009)	7 camps
◆ Summer Camps (Reading and Writing for Rural Students & Teachers)	(since 2012)	1 camp
□ Rural Classroom Book Clubs	(since 2012)	15 schools (2 provinces)
◆ Essay contests and publications		
□ Read to Discover/Teach to Inspire *	(since 1996)	17 th year
* Since 2009, Read to Discover essay contests have included both students and teachers. Award winning essays are posted on the ESS website.		
◆ Read Classics projects	(since 2000)	233 schools
◆ Teaching Equipment and Facilities		
□ Science laboratory equipment	(since 2002)	26 schools
□ Teachers training VCDs	(since 2002)	28 schools
□ Audiovisual equipment	(since 2002)	12 schools
□ Classroom desks, chairs and tables	(since 2002)	59 schools
□ Students beds for boarding facility	(since 2002)	1 school
□ Musical instruments for rural schools	(since 2003)	382 schools (18 provinces)
□ Sports equipment/material for rural schools	(since 2003)	52 schools
□ Teaching equipment/material in specially poor counties	(since 2003)	63 schools (5 counties in 3 provinces)
□ Equipment/material for rural county teachers training centers	(since 2004)	10 centers (8 provinces)
□ School broadcasting systems	(since 2005)	2 schools (2 provinces)
□ Computer equipment	(since 2007)	570 sets (at 19 RMICs)
SERC Series III: Financial Aid for Rural Students (FARS)		
Total number of scholarship awards	(since 1997)	20,031
Of which: Primary students (PS)		2,299
Junior secondary (JSS)		9,918
Senior secondary students (SSS and vocational school students)		6,312
College students (HE)		722
Students with disabilities in special education schools		780
Special Projects		
◆ Tree planting project (Inner Mongolia & Gansu)	(since 2003)	65,000 saplings
◆ Soya bean workshop & pig farm (Fuping County, Hebei)	(2003)	1 school
◆ Arts/skills training for girls in specially poor counties (Gansu)	(2003)	2 schools
◆ Multimedia equipment for earthquake disaster area (Beichuan, Sichuan)	(2008)	10 schools/disaster shelters

www.esscare.org



A New Look for the ESS Website

After months of hard work, ESS volunteers have finished restructuring our website, giving it a new look with expanded and updated information on the various aspects of our programs. We hope the new website will serve as a key link between ESS and our sponsors, our volunteers, and others who are concerned about education in the rural areas in China.

Please visit our website often, and help us improve by letting us know if you experience any problems finding the information you are looking for, or encounter any other specific issues. The new website retains the same address: www.esscare.org.

Since 1988, ESS has dedicated its efforts to help improve the quality of education in rural China through the *Support Education in Rural China (SERC) Program Series*. While improvements are needed in many aspects of education, the SERC programs have focused on three main themes: (a) providing reading material and information resources to the rural areas; (b) improving the quality of teaching and learning in rural schools; and (c) providing financial assistance for rural students. In practice, many program activities work across all three themes. Being a non-profit intermediary service organization without any funds of its own, ESS plans and manages the SERC Program Series according to the amount of contribution it receives. Sponsors select the programs they would like to support, and receive regular feedback on the progress of these programs. The following pages of this report summarize the development and current status of ongoing activities in the SERC Program Series, with highlights on the events in 2012.



SERC Program Series I – Providing Reading Material and Information Resources

Reading is a fundamental learning skill, and supplementary reading is an essential part of basic education. A major concern of the SERC Program Series is to help rural students and communities gain access to reading material and information resources. In addition to providing assistance for rural libraries and information centers, ESS has supported a series of activities to promote reading in the rural schools, including annual essay competitions, training for teachers, reading of classics, reading and writing summer camps, rural classroom book clubs, etc. (see SERC Program Series II, page E-6).

Rural School Libraries (RSLs)

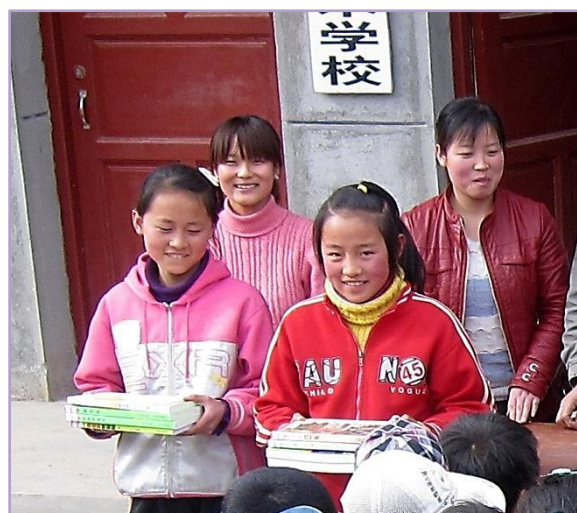
The SERC Program Series started in 1988/89 with the provision of books to four rural schools in China to help set up libraries for the students, teachers and local communities. The project has expanded steadily over the past 25 years as a major component of our efforts to support education in rural China. Altogether 5,474 RSLs have been established throughout the country, supported by donations we received from ESS sponsors. Eighty-nine of these RSLs were set up in 2012, in remote and poor rural areas in 13 provinces (see Chart 1 and Tables 1 and 2 on page B-2).

Rural Public Libraries (RPLs)

Since 1988, ESS has worked with local governments in China to help set up rural public libraries (RPLs), focusing mainly on rural communities in the provinces of Guizhou and Guangxi (see Table 5, page B-4). For each RPL, ESS provides financial support in the first five years of operation, after which the local government takes full responsibility for funding book purchases and operating costs. As the last of the 47 RPLs has completed the initial five-year period in 2012, ESS involvement in the project is currently limited to the provision of incentive book funds to eight RPLs, at US\$400 per RPL.

Rural Multimedia Information Centers (RMICs)

In 2012, thanks to the legacy of an old soldier in Taiwan, ESS was able to contribute towards the establishment of two RMICs in Yangbi County in Yunnan, with the Yunnan Children and Youth Development Foundation taking up half of the project costs. Since the initiation of the project in 2007, ESS has helped set up nineteen RMICs in selected rural schools in China (see Table 6, page B-4). The objective of the RMICs, each equipped with a computer network comprising a server and 30 terminals, is to provide resources for students, teachers and local residents to learn how to use computers and to access the Internet for online information. However, limited funding has slowed down the expansion of this project. A key component in the initial project design – the provision of library books for the RMICs – was removed from the project in 2010/11. To further stretch out our resources, ESS has initiated the cost-sharing arrangement in Yunnan in 2012.



Student representatives at Fengshan Primary School in Gansu receive the RSL books donated through ESS.



SERC Program Series II – Improving Teaching and Learning in Rural Schools

A series of SERC program activities has focused specifically on upgrading the quality and skills of teachers, on motivating students to learn, and on improving the overall learning and teaching environment in rural schools. A full list of these activities is given in the table on page E-4. Following are some of the major events in 2012.

Basic Education Conference

The Guizhou Provincial Education Bureau joined ESS in sponsoring the 48th Basic Education Conference, which was held from July 24-26, 2012, at the Guizhou Normal University in Guiyang. Partner institutions included the Central Education Committee of the China Democratic League (CDL), the Associated Colleges in China (ACC), and the K. P. Tin Foundation in Hong Kong. About 800 school principals, teachers and education personnel attended the conference. They came from different rural counties within Guizhou and 18 other provinces/autonomous regions across the country.

The conference covered two major areas – education concepts and pedagogy. Presentations were made by specialists from the US and Taiwan and from various institutions on the mainland. In the morning sessions, lectures were given on a range of topics, including: (a) macro policy guidelines in basic education and the effects of implementation at the grassroot level (*Zhang Li, Chief, China National Education Development Research Center*); (b) the impact of reading classics on the intellectual development of students and on the professional ethics of teachers (*Professor Gu Jiu, Guizhou Normal University*); (c) the brain and learning, reading, creativity, emotion and character development (*Professor Daisy L. Hong, Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience, Taiwan National Central University*); (d) education should be democratic and scientific (*Wei Shusheng, Director, Panjin Municipal Vocational Technical College, Liaoning*); (e) the theory and practice of youth counseling and youth character development (*Huang Su-Fei, Associate Professor, Education Center for Humanities and Social Sciences, Yang Ming University, Taiwan*); and (f) lessons from the OECD Program for International Student Assessment (*Xie Lin, Researcher, Pudong Education Development Research Institute, Shanghai*).

As in previous years, afternoon sessions offered a rich and diversified program of different activities. Participants could take part in a principals' forum, or in discussion groups on the teaching of language, or science, or mathematics, or music, or on early childhood education. They could also attend ACC student presentations on personal experiences with the education system in the US.

Overall evaluation of the content and organization of the conference was positive. Participants were particularly impressed with the knowledge and skills as well as the professional attitude of the lecturers and discussion leaders. With regard to science education, participants were concerned about the shortage of science teachers and basic laboratory equipment in many schools. Teachers were also worried that the large size of classes and an overloaded curriculum would make it difficult for them to practice what they had learned.

In response to a survey ESS conducted in a number of provinces in 2012, rural schools indicated that they would need support most urgently in the training of principals and teachers, not only to learn advanced education concepts and upgrade teaching skills, but also to boost morale and promote professional ethics. As emphasized by leaders in the education field in China: **“At this stage of education development, the most crucial and urgent task is to train and cultivate a team of high quality professional rural teachers.”**



Rural teachers from all over the country packed the lecture halls at the 2012 ESS Basic Education Conference.

Summer Camps for Rural Students

In 2012, ESS sponsored 16 summer camps for about fourteen hundred rural school children in China. The programs involved more than a dozen universities, academic, research and medical institutions, and volunteer groups in China. They took up the responsibilities for recruiting and training volunteer instructors, planning camp programs, preparing camp materials, and conducting the camp activities. Logistic support was provided by local education offices, schools and other institutions around the campsites. For a list of the summer camp locations and partner institutions, please see Table 8 (page B-5).

Science Camps. The main theme for twelve of the summer camps in 2012 was science education. Camp activities aimed at inspiring children to learn, observe, think and carry out hands-on experiments, and focused on knowledge not usually covered in the regular school curriculum. For example, at the campsite in Hezheng County, Gansu, volunteers from Northwest Normal University prepared a program on environmental protection. After a brief introduction on different methods to purify water, participants were divided into small groups to design their own experiments in water purification. The groups first made up their own samples of polluted water, then came up with different designs to purify the samples. No matter how complicated the processes were, all the groups were able to complete their task at the end. Another camp activity asked the participants to make creative uses of waste material that they brought from home. At the Yuexi campsite deep in the Daliang mountains in Sichuan, volunteers from Southwest University devised a simple game to introduce the concept of biodiversity and the importance of maintaining ecological balance on earth. The Baotou Medical College volunteer group focused on health and personal hygiene at the Damao campsite, Inner Mongolia, teaching participants from the Xilamuren Grassland the correct way to brush teeth, simple ways to stop bleeding, and the harmful effects of smoking, drinking and “Internet addiction”.

Camps with General Programs. A volunteer group from the National Chengchi University in Taiwan, in cooperation with the Guyuan Education Research Office in Ningxia, Guizhou Normal University, and Yunnan University, respectively, organized three summer camps that offered a general program of activities. This was the second year for the volunteer group from Taiwan to be involved in the ESS summer camp programs. The experience was rewarding for both the volunteers and the participants.

Read and Write Camp. To promote reading and writing in rural schools, ESS worked with the Beijing Joint Publishing Company volunteer group to organize a read and write camp for students and teachers from Gansu, Inner Mongolia and Sichuan. Participating students were selected from the award winners in the *Read to Discover* essay contests in the previous three years, and were accompanied by their language teachers. The campsite was located at the Sihai Confucius Institute in the suburbs of Beijing, which provided free room and board for the participants. The seven-day camp program consisted of lectures, writing assignments, group discussions and reports, and visits to historical and cultural landmarks in Beijing. Both students and teachers indicated that the camp activities were inspiring and helpful in improving their comprehension and writing skills. As follow-up to the summer camp program, ESS initiated a *Rural Classroom Book Club project* to help the teacher participants promote reading and writing in their schools.



Bonding of volunteers and participants at the Yanglang campsite in Touying Township, Guyuan District, Ningxia Autonomous Region.



Having fun trying hands-on experiments at the Yuexi campsite in Sichuan, with volunteers from Southwest Univ.

Read to Discover Essay Contests

Seventy essays out of a total of 1,362 submissions were selected for awards in the *Read to Discover* essay contest held in its 17th year in 2012. Started in 1996, the annual contests aimed at encouraging students and teachers to fully utilize the books provided under the ESS Rural School Library projects. In recent years, the effectiveness of these contests has declined, and new initiatives are needed to invigorate efforts to promote reading.

Based on a wide canvass of views from the rural schools, ESS provincial representatives recommended that the annual contests be discontinued from 2013 and that our limited resources be used for other urgent needs, such as teachers training.

Read Classics Projects

Since 2000, ESS has supported the reading of classics and classical poems as an extracurricular activity in rural schools. ESS provided the schools with relevant textbooks, and organized training for the teachers. Interest in the project increased as participating schools reported on their positive experiences. Teachers have found that the reading of classics has not only helped the students refine their speech and language skills, but also improved their overall ability to learn and enhanced their appreciation of traditional culture and ethics. The project has been extended to 233 schools by 2012.



SERC Program Series III - Financial Aid for Rural Students (FARS)

ESS started the Financial Aid for Rural Students (FARS) program in 1997 to help rural children complete at least a basic education. Initially the program was targeted towards primary and junior secondary students whose families could not afford to keep them in school. As government input for these levels of education increased, ESS assistance has shifted towards senior secondary and college students, and to children with disabilities and children lacking normal parental care. Between 1997 and 2012, ESS gave out a total of 20,031 scholarship awards. The 873 awards in 2012 were given to 23 primary students, 192 junior secondary students, 396 senior secondary and vocational school students, 134 college students and 128 students with disabilities attending special education schools (see Chart 2 and Tables 3 and 4, page B-3).

At the end of each school year, ESS sends to sponsors a package of information on each student under their sponsorship, including grade reports, description of family situation, and letter of appreciation. Sponsors very often decide to continue their support for the same students as they progress from primary or secondary schools through college. A number of students in the FARS program have now finished their studies and started to work in different walks of life. The care and concern of ESS sponsors have helped them overcome difficulties at critical junctures in their lives, and given them hope and courage to work hard for their future. They are thankful for the assistance they have received. Many of them are inspired to begin making their own contribution as volunteers, carrying on the ESS spirit to help those in need in the rural areas in China.

ESS encourages sponsors to communicate directly with the students they support, or visit the students and their schools in person. Both sponsors and students value the opportunities for interaction. Following are excerpts from a report we recently received from a sponsor in Pennsylvania, on the memorable visit he and his daughter had in the summer of 2012.

The visit resulted from a recent Christmas card that our family received from Miss Lu Mengna, a Nancheng Middle School student whom we sponsored through ESS. In a message attached to her card, Miss Lu expressed her appreciation for the support she had received from us and then added, "Although I can probably never pay you back for what you have done for me, I will pay it forward and relay your love to others that may need my help in the future." It was this statement that prompted us to visit this student and her school, because the values reflected in this statement happen to be among those that our family cherishes the most. We were delighted and decided to meet this student in person.

On June 21 and 22, 2012, we visited Nancheng Middle School in Qingshen County, Sichuan province. Our family has recently sponsored several students in that school, but this was the first time we paid an on-site visit to meet the students in person.

We were well received by both the teachers and students at the School. Principal Lei Jianying went out of her way to make us feel welcomed and at home. She also organized two forums for us to talk to the teachers and students respectively. At the suggestion of Assistant Principal Liang, my daughter Rebecca interacted with many students in an English class and conducted a cross-cultural science experiment on creativity with many students in that school.

We were pleased to meet all four students we have sponsored through ESS. We were especially grateful to Principal Lei and her staff for arranging a visit to Miss Lu Mengna's home, where we were well received by Miss Lu and her family.