



SUPPORT EDUCATION IN RURAL CHINA PROGRAM SERIES

認助中國鄉村教育項目系列

2009 Annual Report

An exciting event for the rural children in Ziyang, Sichuan Province, took place in the summer of 2009 – the Science and Music Camps co-sponsored by ESS, the Shanghai Institutes of Biological Sciences, local schools, education bureaus and social institutions.

Clockwise from right: ①Dr. Lungching Chiao presented the camp banner to the student leaders, with Dr. Mary Clevenger-Bright from the University of Washington looking on as one of the honored guests. ②Through special lenses they helped to make, students watched the total solar eclipse which occurred during one of the camp days. ③Students worked carefully on an onion peel to be studied under the microscope.



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

Support Education in Rural China (SERC) Program Series

2009 Annual Report

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Foreword

Dr. Mu-ming Poo, President, ESS

The year 2009 represents another year of growth and expansion of ESS/SERC activities. Thanks to the devotion and tireless efforts of Dr. Lungching Chiao and many volunteers within and outside China, we have reaped many fruits and planted many seeds across the broad rural areas of China. In this annual report, you will read about the many programs that have continued to flourish, including the rural school libraries, essay contests, rural multimedia information centers, music programs in rural schools, financial aid for rural students, and basic education conferences/workshops. In addition, we have initiated a new Science Summer Camp Program for rural schools, in collaboration with the Shanghai Institutes of Biological Sciences (SIBS) of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS).

When ESS was founded thirty years ago, our goal was to help promote the development of education and science in China. The first activity of ESS was the initiation of the *Science and Technology Review*, a journal now edited and published regularly in China. While the SERC activities over the past two decades have focused mainly on support for all aspects of rural education, the importance of science education in rural areas has not escaped our notice. The development of rural education is tightly linked to the development of the local economy, which depends in turn on the quality of scientific and technical education that enables the people to thrive on their own land. Science education is important in helping people understand nature, cope with nature (e.g., taking proper care of their own health), and work with nature in order to earn their livelihood (e.g., using their land properly and protecting the environment). The future of Chinese society depends to a large extent on how the environment of the vast rural areas is properly managed by the people who live there. This depends on understanding the interaction between people and their environment. Science education, particularly education on ecological and environmental issues, has become increasingly important to the development of rural communities in China.






A SIBS graduate student/researcher has the full attention of the class as he makes a presentation at one of the Science Summer Camps in Sichuan.

Under the co-sponsorship of ESS/SERC and SIBS/CAS, two Science Summer Camps were held in 2009 in rural schools in Sichuan province (Nanjin Middle School in Ziyang and Yucheng District No. 2 Secondary School in Ya'an). A group of twelve graduate students and three teachers from SIBS/CAS participated in a four-day program in each school. Lectures on health and nutrition, brain science, plant science and ecology were delivered in the morning, and laboratory exploratory activities were organized in the afternoon. Approximately 200 rural students selected from local primary and secondary schools

participated in the camps with great enthusiasm. For the SIBS/CAS graduate students and teachers from the urban areas, it was both inspiring and rewarding to teach and interact with the lovely rural children and teenagers who were so eager to learn. The 2009 science summer camp was a successful experiment for a new line of ESS/SERC activity, involving science researchers and teachers from the big cities who rarely had the opportunity to apply their scientific knowledge to the practical needs of the rural communities. We hope that such science camps held in collaboration with the institutes of CAS and universities in China will continue into the future and expand in scale to cover areas as broad as many other SERC activities.

The Chinese economy is thriving but the environment is deteriorating, as thoroughly documented in the lengthy chapter on China in Jared Diamond's book *Collapse*. This is a global issue that deserves serious attention by each one of us, regardless of where we live. My personal view is that SERC will make a lasting contribution by paying special attention to environmental issues in our future education programs in rural China. For this, we need the continuing support of sponsors for our programs, as well as a strong team of volunteers both within and outside China. Your support will not only provide funding for the continuation and expansion of ESS/SERC programs in the coming years, but also encourage our volunteers with your care and concern. Let us all work together for this worthy cause, as members of a much larger community in this global village on our planet.

SERC Program Series 1988-2009 Major Results and Activities at a Glance

SERC Series I: Providing Reading Material and Information Resources		
 Adopt a Rural School Library (ARSL)	(since 1989)	5,111 ARSLs
 Adopt a Rural Public Library (ARPL)	(since 1988)	45 ARPLs
 Adopt a Rural Multi-media Information Center (RMIC)	(since 2007)	9 RMICs
SERC Series II: Improving Teaching and Learning		
◆ Basic Education Conferences/workshops for rural teachers - Jointly held with provincial/municipal institutions	(since 1993)	45 conferences
◆ Science Summer Camps	(since 2009)	2 camps
◆ Music Summer Camps	(since 2009)	1 camp
◆ Essay contests and publications <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Read to Discover/Teach to Inspire</i> *	(since 1996)	14 th year
* Since 2009, <i>Read to Discover</i> essay contests have included both students and teachers. Award winning essays are posted on the ESS website.		
◆ <i>Read Classics</i> projects	(since 2000)	117 schools in 9 provinces
◆ Teaching Equipment and Facilities		
<input type="checkbox"/> Science laboratory equipment	(since 2002)	26 schools
<input type="checkbox"/> Teachers training VCDs	(since 2002)	28 schools
<input type="checkbox"/> Audiovisual equipment	(since 2002)	12 schools
<input type="checkbox"/> Classroom desks, chairs and tables	(since 2002)	59 schools
<input type="checkbox"/> Students beds for boarding facility	(since 2002)	1 school
<input type="checkbox"/> Musical instruments in poor counties	(since 2003)	325 schools in 14 provinces
<input type="checkbox"/> Equipment/facilities for schools in specially poor counties	(since 2003)	5 counties in 3 provinces
<input type="checkbox"/> Equipment/material for rural teachers training centers	(since 2004)	10 counties in 8 provinces
<input type="checkbox"/> Equipment/material for physical education	(since 2005)	41 schools
<input type="checkbox"/> Computer equipment	(since 2007)	270 sets (including 9 RMICs)
<input type="checkbox"/> Multi-media classroom equipment (with large screen monitor/TV)	(since 2008)	10 sets (in Sichuan disaster area)
SERC Series III: Financial Aid for Rural Students		
Total number of scholarship awards	(since 1997)	17,274
Of which: Primary students (PS)		2,247
Junior secondary (JSS) and special education students		9,715
Senior secondary students (SSS and vocational school students)		4,991
College students (HE)		321
Special Projects		
◆ Tree planting project in Inner Mongolia & Gansu	(since 2003)	>50,000 saplings
◆ Soya bean workshop & pig farm in Fuping County, Hebei	(2003)	1 school
◆ Arts/skills training for girls in specially poor counties, Gansu	(2003)	2 schools
◆ School broadcasting systems in Guyuan, Ningxia; and Ziyang, Sichuan	(since 2005)	4 schools
◆ Multi-media classroom/large screen TV project, Sichuan	(2008)	10 schools in earthquake disaster area

SERC I: Providing Reading Material and Information Resources

In 2009, *Adopt a Rural School Library (ARSL)* projects were implemented in 145 schools, located in poor rural areas in 22 provinces/autonomous regions in China. Since 1988, ESS has helped set up 5,111 ARSLs in rural China. Details are given in Chart 1, page B-2; Table 1, page B-3; and Table 5, page B-4. ESS requires that all ARSLs are managed properly to ensure that the books are not only well cared for but also well used by the students and teachers. ARSLs have specific opening hours for students, teachers, and local residents as well. Some of the books are also kept on rotation in library boxes which are carried around to each class, making it easier for students to check out the books they like. Each class has a reading session each week, during which teachers would guide the students in selecting the books to read and in writing book reports. Many schools organize various activities to encourage students to read and make good use of the books donated, such as drama and story telling competitions, exhibitions and essay contests.



A student totally absorbed by the book she's reading at an ARSL in Xinjiang.

The *Read to Discover essay contest* for students and teachers was held for the 14th year in 2009. Almost 2,000 essay submissions were received from eight provinces/autonomous regions. The review process was thorough and professionally conducted by a group of editors in the Joint Publishing Company in Beijing, who volunteered their services in reviewing the submissions and selecting those to receive awards.

Rural Multimedia Information Centers (RMIC). Formerly known as Rural Library and Information Centers, these facilities have adopted the terminology *Multimedia* to reflect the nature of the hardware placed in them. In addition to the four RMICs already operating in 2008, five RMICs have been established in 2009. The location of the RMICs is listed in Table 2 on page B-3. Feedback material from the RMICs indicates that these centers have been well used. Computerization of the library management system in the RMICs has led to improved efficiency in the use of library materials. Training sessions are regularly conducted to teach students, teachers and local village residents how to access the Internet and use basic software for their studies or work. Teaching and learning become more interesting and interactive with the use of multimedia teaching material. Local farmers are able to obtain information relevant to the cultivation, processing and marketing of their produce. For example, an orange grower in Sichuan who reaped a good harvest in 2009 was able to find timely marketing information, enabling him to sell all 20,000 catties of the fruit he had harvested.

Despite China's rapid overall economic growth in recent years, regional imbalances continue to keep many poor and remote rural areas deprived of the necessary resources. There is still much need for the development of the RMIC projects, which will help the disadvantaged rural communities gain access to and effectively use information and technology to improve their living conditions.

SERC II: Improving Teaching and Learning

ESS held its 45th Basic Education Conference in Nanning, Guangxi, in the summer of 2009. This was followed by a Science and Music Summer Camp in Ziyang County, Sichuan, and then a Science Summer Camp in Ya'an, also in Sichuan.

Over a thousand scholars, education officials, teachers and students from within and outside China participated in these activities. ESS invited and subsidized the expenses for 205 participants, mainly principals and core teachers from rural schools in 17 provinces. Thirty-eight professors, teachers and school principals (including 6 from the US, 7 from within mainland China, and 8 from Taiwan) were invited to give presentations in the series of events. They provided their services on a voluntary basis and did not receive any remuneration. In addition, 16 American students from the Associated College in China (ACC) gave presentations at the education conference, and 15 graduate students/researchers from the Shanghai Institutes of Biological Sciences came to the science camps in Sichuan to help organize and deliver the programs.

The 45th ESS Basic Education Conference

The 2009 Conference, held at the Guangxi Teachers Education University (GTEU) from July 14-17, was jointly sponsored by ESS and the Education Bureau of the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region.



Cooperating institutions included the National Education Committee and the Guangxi Regional Committee of the China Democratic League, the ACC, the University of Washington (Seattle), the K. P. Tin Foundation (Hong Kong), and the Hsin-Yi Foundation (Taiwan).

During the 4-day conference, lectures open to all participants were delivered in the morning sessions. Afternoon sessions were arranged under five different themes: school management, math education, reading



Speakers at one of the discussion sessions in the ESS Basic Education Conference in Nanning

education, pre-school education, and the personal experiences of American students in primary and high schools in the US. Each theme was covered in seven sessions, providing a rich source of information. For those interested to read more about this event, a detailed report on the speakers and topics of discussions at the conference has been posted to the ESS website (www.esscare.org).

Typical of mid-summer weather in Guangxi, temperatures soared well above 35° centigrade and

the humidity was extremely high throughout the duration of the Conference. Though the conference facilities offered no air conditioning, they were fully packed. Sweating in airless halls and classrooms, the speakers were meticulous in their presentations while the listeners took careful notes. One could not but wonder how keenly teachers from the rural schools aspire to learn new ideas and concepts.

To many principals and teachers, the presentations and discussions at the conference were eye openers, covering topics from theory to practice, with information they found totally new and inspiring. They valued the detailed and thoughtful teaching plans and methods presented to them. They reflected, however, that with the current emphasis on examination results and admission rates in schools, they might not be able to find the time or the resources to apply some of the lessons they learned. They hoped that education reform and the continuing emphasis on quality education in China would lead to a solid, broad-based foundation for children's learning in schools.

ESS Summer Camps

In July 2009, ESS initiated a new program for rural schools in China –Science Summer Camps. In collaboration with the Shanghai Institutes of Biological Sciences (SIBS), two Science Camps were held in Sichuan, one at Nanjin Secondary School in Ziyang from July 21 to 24, and the other at Yucheng No. 2 Secondary School in Ya'an from July 26 to 29. Concurrently with the Science Camp in Ziyang, a Music Camp was held for students from local primary and secondary schools.

The Science Camps consist of four-day activity programs with a central theme of “exploring biological sciences.” About 100 students selected from local schools participated in each of the two camps in Ziyang and Ya'an. Grouped into classes of about twenty-five each, students attended morning lectures and discussions on such topics as the brain's activities in a day, sleep and dreams, learning and memory, smoking addiction, the wonders of vision, plant science, health and nutrition. Afternoon exploratory sessions introduced them to the use of microscopes, the preparation of samples, and documentaries on general scientific topics. Graduate students/researchers from SIBS served as lecturers as well as team leaders of the camp activities. They made exhaustive preparations prior to the camps, and interacted closely with the children during the four days of activities. Knowing that a very special event – total solar eclipse – would occur on July 22 during the Ziyang camp, they prepared materials in advance and taught the children at the camp how to make special lenses so that they could all watch the eclipse. For the children from the rural schools, the camp days were unforgettable, combining learning and fun. For the teachers from SIBS, the experience was rewarding, bringing them close to the needs of the rural children and communities, and giving them the opportunity to serve such needs with their knowledge and skills.



A student proudly holds up her certificate of attendance presented to her by one of the teachers from SIBS, at the Science Camp in Ya'an.

At the Music Camp in Ziyang, the tightly scheduled four-day program consisted of classes for voice and various musical instruments. Introductory lessons on music theory and practice were interspersed with games and performances. Professionals from a local music school volunteered to teach the children how to sing and how to play the *er-hu*, *yue-qin*, *suo-na*, Chinese flute, guitar, and percussion instruments. It was amazing how fast the children picked up the skills and how creative they were. Most of the children were able to play simple tunes within three days. With the help of the teachers from the Science camp, the children also participated in the exciting event of watching the solar eclipse.

Students and teachers put together a program of capturing performances in the combined closing ceremony for both the Science and Music camps in Ziyang. The ACC American students also made a special trip to join in the festivities. The success of the Science and Music camps owed much to the hard work of the local organizers, mainly the Sichuan group of ESS representatives, teachers from the participating schools, as well as several senior retirees from the Ziyang Association for Poverty Alleviation. In them we saw the finest examples of the spirit of voluntarism.



Left: ACC students performed at the Closing Ceremony of the Science and Music Camps in Ziyang. Right: The yue-qin group with their teacher at the Music Camp.

SERC III: Financial Aid for Rural Students

In 2009 ESS provided financial support to 908 students from 17 different provinces/autonomous regions in rural China, including 3 students in primary schools, 342 students in junior secondary and special education, 449 in senior secondary, and 114 in institutions of higher education. A total of 17,274 scholarship awards have been given to rural students since 1997 (details given in Chart 2, page B-2; Table 3, page B-3; and Table 6, page B-5). As increased government input into education over the past few years has provided substantial subsidy for primary and junior secondary students, ESS financial assistance for rural students has shifted to the higher levels of education. However, support is still given to the lower levels of education in cases where there is proven need for assistance.

In 2010, 28 students who have been receiving ESS assistance are expected to graduate from college. Over the past few years, 13 students supported by ESS scholarships have completed their college education. Some have started to work; others have continued to pursue graduate studies in various disciplines. Following is the story of one of these students.

Zhao Xumei came from a poor village in Gansu Province. With help from Dr. Wu-Teh Hsiang through the ESS program, she completed her school and college education last year. She is thankful for her new life, made possible by many years of continuous support from Dr. Hsiang. In September 2009, she started her first job teaching chemistry in a senior secondary school in a remote rural area. Life is by no means easy for a stranger in a little village far away from home, but she has managed to overcome the adverse conditions to become a fully competent teacher in the school. Not only is she a good teacher in the classroom, but she also spends time caring for her students, helping them solve problems in their studies as well as in their daily lives. We believe there will be many more students like Xumei, following the examples of those who reach out to help students from poor rural families, so that many more will receive good quality education and become valuable members of their communities.

Our Summer Trip in China

Dr. Mary Clevenger-Bright

In July 2009, through the ESS and the University of Washington (UW) partnership, Norma Zavala and I were invited to share our experiences, knowledge, and perspectives with a group of Chinese educators at the ESS Summer Professional Development Conference at Guangxi Teachers College in Nanning City, Guangxi Province. We are affiliated with the UW Teacher Education Program, Norma as principal at one of our partner schools, and I direct part of the Masters in Teaching Program. With great anticipation and appreciation, we prepared for our trip to China, embarking on a journey that would broaden and deepen our limited understanding of China. Our motto for the trip was “go with the flow, be open, and try everything”.



Dr. Mary Clevenger-Bright at the ESS Basic Education Conference in Nanning, Guangxi

Upon arrival at the Beijing Airport, we made the invaluable connection with the hosts for our travels in China, Dr. Lungching Chiao and Dr. Wu-Teh Hsiang. Dr. Hsiang from Syracuse University played the role of lead cultural guide, guardian angel, and interpreter throughout our ten days in China, beginning with our first meeting at the airport. He graciously arranged for and navigated our way through a busy 36 hours in Beijing, including trips to Tiananmen Square, the Forbidden City, the Great Wall, the Summer Palace, a dinner of Peking Duck, all ending with a foot massage. We quickly realized that we would have the privilege of traveling in the company of people who would help us understand the many experiences that were to come.

Our delegation grew as we traveled and arrived at the city of Nanning for the Conference. During our conference presentations, our attendees were interested and curious. We tried not only to share our knowledge of schooling in America but also to learn as much as we could about schooling in China. We were fortunate to have the language interpretation skills of the visiting Fulbright Scholars as we participated in the sessions, both as presenters and as members of the audience. Throughout our stay, over amazing shared meals, and during our bus/car/airplane travels, we asked and answered questions, considered differences and similarities, and discussed successes and challenges present for us all as educators. We were continually struck by the degree of commitment, kindness, and generosity of our Chinese hosts and fellow conference participants.

After a trip to beautiful Guilin and Yangshuo where we experienced the majestic mountains, bustling markets, Yangshuo Light Show directed by Zhang Yimou, and boat ride on the Lijiang River, our travels took us to our trip's most inspirational moment in an outlying village near Chengdu. There, our delegation joined other dignitaries to play host to the Opening Ceremony of one of the rural camps supported by ESS. Rows of excited children sat patiently waiting for the opening not only of the science camp, but also of their newly constructed school to replace the one destroyed by the 2008 Sichuan earthquake. Families circled the venue, red scarves were presented to our group of honored guests, speeches were presented, and at the end of the ceremony, children streamed into the new classrooms, eagerly engaging in introductory lessons and new materials, and finally settling in to a week-long series of camp activities.



Ms. Norma Zavala signing autographs for students at the summer camps in Ziyang, Sichuan Province.

Our journey ended with a short stay in Chengdu where we strolled the streets, visited museums, and saw the famous Chengdu Panda Breeding and Research Center, Dujiang Dam, and the Leshan Buddha.

Our thanks go to each and all who guided us through our time in China, introducing us to the many rich and diverse, ancient and modern, dimensions of China and its amazing people. Countless images have come together to extend our knowledge of this vast and complex nation. We are grateful to have learned from each person, moment, and encounter. We arrived home with a greater understanding of our shared work as educators in our respective cultures, as well as our global connections.