

## 2011 EEF Small Project Report

EEF small projects started from 2009 with their locally initiated and conducted nature, emphasis on process for accountability and transparency, and on learning by doing. From Nov. 2011 – Dec. 2012, 12 local school and public/community libraries completed 21 small projects, in the areas of:

### READING AND WRITING



Students' Role Play, "Happy English",  
Kaili No.1 High School, Guizhou

Two English reading projects differed in focus, target population, activities and outcomes, but both were strong in execution and assessment. "World English e-corner" project from Tongwei No. 1 High School, Gansu (甘肃通渭一中, 教室里的世界英语 e 角) targeted at 120 students included searching & synthesizing English text on the world culture. "Happy English" project from Kaili No. 1 High School, Guizhou (贵州凯里一中, 快乐英语) targeted at 20+ students included listening and retelling simple, interesting stories in addition to deep reading of complex texts. Interestingly, a common outcome of both projects is a salient increase in students' interest in English, illustrated by surveys and student examples, which implies that these projects echo students' inner thirst for interesting, challenging and rewarding ways of learning.

### INQUIRY-BASED LEARNING

Inquiry-based learning includes inquiry on humanities and inquiry on science.

#### Inquiry on Humanities

As an example of history study, "Roosevelt's New Deal" project was Jiangsu Huai'an No. 1 High School's (江苏淮安一中, 罗斯福新政) 2<sup>nd</sup> attempt in inquiry-based learning in history.

The teacher leveraged Document-based Questions, an approach learned from 2010 joint project with Chula Vista School “The Revolution Path of Modern China”, San Diego and by careful design made it into full play. Though we can see the students were greatly benefited from the reference materials which provided crossing viewpoints and evidences in both politics and economics fields, and the teacher’s guidance in the analysis, the lack of of critical thinking in general and historical literacy in specific hinder the students to reach a higher level. Our small projects to cultivate these qualities are absolutely needed and have a long way to go.



**Student interviewing an Hui Elder, “Tianzhu Cultural Study”, Tianzhu Xinhua Middle School, Gansu**

As two examples of cultural study projects, “Tianzhu Cultural Study” project from Tianzhu Xinhua Middle School, Gansu (甘肃天祝新华中学, 天祝文化探究) is the first small project from this satellite library school, with an impressive collection of work products for a greener. The teacher took solid efforts in leading students school-wide into study on customs and culture of local ethnicities, such as food, clothes, festivals, religion, and place naming culture, resulting in reports. A competition was held for student reports. Some students not only gathered information from books and from the Internet, but also interviewed their families and community elders. “Four Hermits in Mountain Shang” project from Danfeng High School, Shaanxi (陕西丹凤中学, 商山四皓) is a local history study project led by an IT teacher . Students studied the historical stories of the four hermits, and collected and studied articles, poems, and plaques assessing these figures and their behaviors. The project was strong in the use of online sources for information, multi-media for presentation, and social media for publicizing project and work products to the community.



**Studying the plaque, "Four Hermits in Mountain Shang",  
Danfeng High School, Shaanxi**

Inspired by oral history pilot project of Tianzhu No. 1 High School, Gansu from 2009-2012, teachers from this school applied the first oral history small project in Evergreen history ----"Tianzhu Walking Horse Culture". Tianzhu Tibetan Autonomous County in Gansu Province is the gateway to the Hexi Corridor, the hub of the Silk Road. The Fork Stage Horse good at flying pace (a.k.a "Tianzhu walking horse") is an excellent local breed, whose high-spirited gait was captured by the Galloping Bronze Horse statue known to the world. Over a long historical period factors including ethnic customs, trade and business, politics and military affairs have formed a rich walking horse culture of breeding, training, trading, and racing. However, because traditionally the related knowledge and stories relied heavily on oral transmission, and the literature on this subject is acutely lacking, the walking horse culture lacks preservation and study. What does the traditional walking horse culture look like? In China's modernization and urbanization process, how is it now? With these questions in mind, the teachers and students interviewed horse breeders, traders, riders, equestrian referees and horse race organizers, recorded the process of horse race and horse breeding. Combining background research and the oral history data, the team answered the research question.



**Village horse race (Left), A horse breeder Narrating (Right), "Tianzhu Walking Horse Culture",  
Tianzhu No. 1 High School, Gansu**

## Inquiry on Science

For science projects, a comparison of the “Solar Lamp” project from Danfeng High School and Tongwei No.1 High School (太阳能灯制作, 丹凤中学和通渭一中) and the “Exploring Universe” project from Tongwei No. 1 High School (宇宙探索, 通渭一中) reveals the difficulty that our science teachers encounter in inquiry-based learning, and how EEF may help. The “Exploring Universe” project uses books and online information as reference (very limited because popular science is underdeveloped in China), without hands-on experiments designed. Students had difficulty in grasping knowledge of this broad topic. The solar lamp project is based on an instructional package (including hardware kit, teaching guide and example lesson plans) EEF developed and equipped the school with. Through hands-on experiments, students learned a specific scope of knowledge including energy conversion, circuit design effectively. Thus EEF’s role in developing support packages (esp. hands-on kit and background reading materials) for science inquiry-learning is vital.



**Students soldering components, “Solar Lamp”,  
Danfeng High School, Shaanxi**

## **COMMUNITY EDUCATION**

In 2012, community service projects are featured with partnering with local organizations for reaching out.



**Family education seminar, “Kindergarteners’ Family Education”,  
Danfeng High School, Shaanxi**

“Kindergarteners’ Family Education” project from Danfeng High School, Shaanxi (丹凤中学, 幼儿家庭教育) reached out to the school kindergarten to promote parents' awareness and knowledge on early family education. Better yet, through the process the school librarian helped the team of kindergarten teachers build the project methodology in addition to domain knowledge to carry on such project independently.



**ICT Session, “Help the Elderly Surf the Web”,  
Tongwei Public Library, Gansu**

“Help the Elderly Surf the Web” project from Tongwei Public Library, Gansu (甘肃通渭县图书馆, 携老网上游) partnered with the Activity Center for Old Cadres and offered weekly ICT training class for 30 avid learners whose age ranges from 50 to 81 in the county. It leveraged our experience from the rural ICT training pilot project in Tianzhu (天祝农牧民信息技术培训项目) so the training contents were made easy to understand and close to the trainees’ life, targeting at their mastery of useful applications, such as health information, Taobao shopping, online banking, and video call with family members. Also hand-writing input board

enabled the trainees to skip learning of the typewriting, the upfront and biggest hurdle of learning ICT. This ICT training is now becoming a regular service of Tongwei Public Library after the project ended.

## **SUMMARY**

As the main vehicle for EEF libraries to improve their services and build their capacity, small projects help the rural libraries make small but steady steps towards excellency.

Regarding inquiry on humanities, our experience with the oral history pilot project of Tianzhu No.1 High School, Gansu in 2009-2012, and the first oral history small project “Tianzhu Walking Horse” showed that oral history is a suitable form for local cultural study. In rural China, though the literature regarding local culture is lacking, there are rich living cultural resources, passed from one generation to the next by oral transmission. Oral history is an ideal instrument to collect these first-hand materials.

Regarding inquiry on science, Evergreen shall advance the success of “Solar Lamp” project by developing frameworks and support packages for more science inquiry topics.

From EEF history and cultural study projects to date, we can see that the lack of critical thinking and research capability limit the depth of students’ inquiry. To cultivate these qualities, a systematic training is needed to go hand in hand with the small project practices.