

TECC Qinghai Summer Institute 2005 Report

Introduction

TECC, (Technology Education Connecting Cultures), is a non-profit organization which is devoted to lead teams of US and Chinese students in carrying out social ventures focused on technology and education. TECC believes that a great deal of positive social impact can arise from leveraging a socially conscious and motivated network, along with the enabling capability of technology, education, and diverse student populations.

Based on this great vision, TECC brings together volunteers from the top universities in US and China, carries out summer project that aimed to help the education development in rural region of China, and chose Qinghai as one of its training site.

TECC Qinghai Summer Institute, which started at July 22nd and ended at August 4th, lasted for fourteen days. The project site located at Xunhua county, Qinghai province. There are total 35 teachers participating in this project, among which 20 are English teachers, 15 are computer teachers. Besides, there are about 10 students also got involved.

18 outstanding volunteers were chosen from America, Beijing and Shanghai. (ten from Tsinghua University, two from Peking University, two from Shanghai JiaoTong University, one from Stanford University, one from U.C.Berkley, two from Lynbrook High school in California.) They all showed great passion for this institute and spent tremendous efforts in preparing and teaching the course.

Lastly, the institute would not be concluded successfully without the great support of Xunhua Education Bureau and the sponsor of Soar Foundation.

Life Forum

On July, 23rd, we hold a life forum oriented to increase the communication between volunteers and local high school students. The life forum was divided into three parts: **Success**, telling them what we think success is and how to be successful. **Study Skills**, the method of improving their examination scores and learning each subject. **Campus life**, sharing our colorful campus life with them. The students there showed huge interest in our speech, and actively raised kinds of questions to us, about life, study, love, friendship. And our team members shared their own experience and feelings and gave them advices on things that perplexed them. The communication is free, open, and relaxed. We all got the feeling that they are a group of energetic youth that full of dream and passion. Through their development may be limited by their born condition and environment, but the optimism they have showed deeply moved us.

English Curriculum

According to the survey we took before the institute and the communication with local teachers, we found that they exhibit more desire in improving their listening and speaking skills compared to reading and writing. We divided them into three classes according to their English proficiency. The high school teachers are nearly fluent in English, while most of middle school teachers are barely able to express themselves verbally. So we can imagine that they just taught English in Chinese, thus it became a vicious circle that their students do not dare to speak English either. In the course of two weeks, however, nearly all of them showed marked improvement in listening and speaking,

for example, it became much easier for them to manage the 3-minute improvisational speech everyday, they can talk with American volunteers freely, in contrast to the situation that they can't understand them at the beginning. It is said that confidence is the only secret that helps speaking English well, and I think it's the best gift we have given them.

Beyond its more superficial efforts at developing listening, speaking, and writing skill for middle school teachers, TECC's English Curriculum team aimed to leave behind novel teaching methods that would benefit students long after the summer institute. For example, the games we played and the debate, speech topic we gave them, can all be used to make their class interesting and encourage their students to speaking English in class. Also, the reading methods and writing techniques we taught which would be helpful in taking the college entrance examination can be imparted to more high school students by their teacher. Furthermore, we have given them many resources in studying English such as newspapers, MAG, internet beside the textbooks, which can help to trigger the students' interest and expand their mind.

So we can see that, the program's actual beneficiaries are the area's hundreds of middle school students. English is not only necessary in admission to a top university, but also vital to survive in today's competitive society. By implementing this program, we hope to boost the whole English level in this less-developed area, and prepare the students better for tomorrow social need.

Computer curriculum

The teachers that participated in the computer training came from two groups: the computer teachers and the English teachers. For the computer teachers, based on their need, we taught them Photoshop, Movie Maker, Flash, and Bios System which we think practical and useful. And it's proved the lectures we gave are greatly welcomed by them. For English teachers, what we taught only limited to Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, Google search, and most commonly used software all of which we believe will be beneficial to their teaching. We found that most of them have never used computer before, so our course began with the most basic knowledge of computer, such as how to type words, how to save a file. After two weeks' training, they have already managed to make a splendid PPT, and can search useful English resources on Internet, and get familiar of how to send an email, how to use Flashget, ec. The computer training well reflected TECC's mission: technology facilitates education.

Another point regarding curriculum needed to be mentioned: we held a general meeting every two days, to report the course progress and reflect the problems we encountered in teaching, then we could brainstorm the resolution for each problem. The feedback on every day's lesson is essential to push the institute toward a successful one.

What we got

For us volunteers, it's a precious opportunity to get to know the education situation in western part of China, from the warm reception of local Education Bureau and hospitality of local people; I can feel their strong thirst for education development. I know a teacher who took part in this program, she learned English just by herself for one year, but now she is undertaking the teaching task of two grades in her school. So the lack of teachers and the scarcity of good teacher could be the main reason that impedes their education development. So I do feel the urgency, as well as significance, for TECC to stretch our help to more poor regions and establish a long-term relationship with them.

During the program, all the teachers are so kind and cooperative; they listened absorbedly in class and actively did all the work we assigned them. I should admit that their earnest attitude infected us and drove all our tiredness away.

The two weeks' project did endow us much, both to teachers and volunteers, not only the knowledge and teaching techniques, but also love, cooperation and progress.