



2010 – How Are We Doing?



Voluntary English Teaching Programme

Stepping Stones (SS) is a grassroots programme designed by local, long-term volunteers in Shanghai to help migrant school children with their English. Since its inception in October 2006, we have been determined to regularly monitor the impact of the programme to ensure we are providing the best possible service with the resources we have. We are proud to say that we are now teaching English in 20 schools and community centres in 4 suburbs of Shanghai with over 250 regular volunteers. Stepping Stones' volunteers all give their time entirely free of charge in return for the excellent opportunity the programme offers to get involved in the local Chinese community.



Stepping Stones was founded at the request of migrant school principals who wished to improve the oral English level of their students. The need was matched with available resources in the expatriate, local, white-collar and corporate communities in Shanghai. This programme not only improves the oral English standards of migrant school students, but also bridges the gulf between the expatriate and corporate communities and the large, marginalized populations of migrants who enter Shanghai for work from poorer parts of China.

Mission Statement

- ❖ To assist students in migrant schools in Shanghai to gain confidence in their English language abilities
- ❖ To help these students to pass their key English examinations
- ❖ To offer volunteers a meaningful way to contribute to the education of under-privileged children

Impact

In the Spring term of 2010, Corinne Hua, the founding Director of Stepping Stones, conducted an impact assessment with 733 Grade 5 students in 21 classes at 3 schools. 5th graders were chosen because it would maximise the comparability between schools and because our volunteers work more in 5th grade classes than in any others. We chose three schools: Huahong and Huabo Lixing Hang Schools, where SS volunteers were teaching for the first time in the second semester (February to June) of academic year 2009-2010, and Jinjia School, where SS has been working with the current 5th grade class consistently over two years.

Students in all 3 of the schools were asked to complete a questionnaire to assess their interests in and attitudes towards English learning in March 2010 (beginning of the Spring semester) and June 2010 (end of the Spring semester).



During this period, the number of students selecting English as their favourite subject increased by 76% among students that had SS volunteers for the semester, and there was a strong correlation between having a volunteer teacher and selecting English as their favourite subject. Percentages of students selecting English as their least favourite subject decreased significantly in all classes with a volunteer teacher and changed very little in the groups without a volunteer teacher. **The number of students who answered 'yes' to the question "Do you like learning English?" increased by as much as 38%** in classes with SS volunteers.

All our survey results at all of the schools surveyed show that having a volunteer teacher made a significant impact on students' interests in and liking of English.

Increase in Confidence across the Board

We analysed the grade the students expected to get in their end of term English exam with the grade they remembered getting in their previous end of semester exam, thus comparing their expectation at the beginning of the term with their expectation at the end of the term. In the groups with the SS volunteers, expectations increased by 10 percentage points compared with 1 percentage point for the group with no volunteer. Also, students in classes with volunteer teachers found English 47% less difficult at the end of the semester than at the beginning, compared with a difference of only 2% in the classes with no volunteers.

We used further tests and questionnaires to measure the students' confidence in completing a variety of tasks in English. In all these tasks, the confidence of the students who had the benefit of an SS volunteer teacher increased by 34% compared to only 2% for those who did not.

The aggregated score for all the survey questions shows that the students with SS volunteers made **overall gains in English learning of 45%** compared with a decrease of **3%** in the classes where there were no volunteers.

What Lies Ahead – Stepping Stones' Vision

Two of the main keys to success in foreign language learning are confidence and interest, especially in children. Anecdotal evidence from English teachers in the schools attest to the fact that by building children's confidence and interest in English, the volunteers are also having a significant impact on the children's examination results, which will make an impact on their futures.

Driven by the encouraging results of our latest impact assessment outlined here, our ultimate vision remains to be able to provide one free oral English lesson every week to every class in every school for migrants in the Shanghai area. So far, we estimate that we are providing free English classes to around 6,000 of the estimated 150,000 students studying in these migrant schools, so there is still a long way to go!



What Our Partners Say about Us

"Students with a volunteer teacher are more confident and interested in learning English; furthermore, teachers in the school also think the programme is good for the students."

- Principal, Huahong School, Minhang

"I think that students show more confidence and interest in learning English through the help of volunteer teachers. Volunteer teachers encourage students to speak and express themselves, so the classes with a volunteer teacher are more active in the English lessons than those without."

- English teacher, Huabo Lixing Hang School, Minhang

"Students are more interested in learning English. Their spoken English has been greatly improved."

- English teacher, Jinjia School, Pudong