



2021 STEPPING STONES ANNUAL REPORT

IMPROVING THE EDUCATION AND GENERAL WELFARE OF
DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN IN CHINA



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Director's Words

Stepping Stones turned 15 years old in October 2021. If there is one constant over the last 15 years, it is change, and 2021 was no exception!

The biggest change in 2021 was the “Double Reduction” Policy, which was announced by China’s Ministry of Education at the end of July. The aim of the policy is to reduce the burden on students and their parents of school homework and off-campus training programs, as well as to reduce the social inequity that results from privileged communities spending excessive amounts of money and time on after-school tuition. In particular, the policy banned training companies from providing after-school programs in academic subjects (including English).

At first, we thought this would present us with a significant challenge. However, the intention of the policy resonates with Stepping Stones’ vision of equal access to quality education for all children in China, and the policy is directed at commercial companies, and specifically allows non-profits to provide after-school programs.

The move away from examination-oriented education and the requirement for after-school programs to be non-academic resonates with our belief that children learn better when they are having fun in the classroom, our teaching approach, which emphasises the active participation and engagement of students in the teaching-learning process, and our overall objective, which is to increase students’ interest and confidence in learning.

After a year of not being able to teach in Shanghai schools due to the epidemic, we were delighted to be invited back into our long-term partner schools to provide fun after-school English and digital literacy lessons to their students, in line with the requirements of the new policy.

Another change in recent years is the reduction of the importance of English in the examination system in China. Given that Stepping Stones was first and foremost an English teaching program, people are often surprised to learn that we fully support this change! Placing such a major emphasis on learning a foreign language, compared with other subjects such as science, digital literacy, humanities, music, art and sports, further widened the gap in educational opportunities for disadvantaged communities in China due to the lack of qualified English teachers, and the narrow focus on the three core subjects of Chinese, maths and English denied children the opportunity for a rounded education. Of course, all children should be given the opportunity and resources to learn a foreign language, but children whose talents lie in other areas, or who have not benefitted from that opportunity, should not be prevented from thriving in the education system due to lack of attainment in English.

Unfortunately, the one thing that everyone would have liked to change – the epidemic situation – stubbornly refused to go away, continuing to affect our ability to send volunteers to teach in rural schools and further reducing the number of foreign volunteers in China. However, some have continued to volunteer from overseas, and at the same time, we are encouraged by a continuous increase in local volunteerism, with more and more Chinese people of all age groups signing up to volunteer with us. In spite of all the challenges, our student numbers have increased compared with 2020, and we have experienced very healthy growth in our online programs.

We are proud to have always been able to adapt our programs to meet the changing needs in China’s education sector, and to contribute to the continuous development of education for disadvantaged communities, and to China’s efforts towards Common Prosperity.

Corinne Richeux Hua
Executive Director

**“Thank you as ever to all of our volunteers, donors and program partners.
None of the achievements detailed in this annual report would be possible without your on-going support!”**



Year in Review



Staff



Volunteers



Lessons Taught



English Teachers
Trained



Students



Average Lessons
Per Student

In 2021, 758 people volunteered with Stepping Stones and 5,879 children and youth benefitted from our interventions, receiving on average more than 15 lessons each over the course of the year.

Our volunteers delivered 6,661 English lessons to 5,172 disadvantaged students at 22 project sites in Shanghai, 23 sites in other provinces (some sites with both online and on-site programs), as well as at thousands of students' homes through the internet.

Our Digital Literacy Program's teachers and volunteers provided 780 digital literacy, life skills or career development lessons to 1,081 students at 18 online or offline teaching sites in Shanghai, Zhejiang, Beijing and Henan, as well as at hundreds of students' homes through the internet.

Our summer camp volunteers delivered 186 lessons in subjects other than English and digital literacy - such as arts and crafts, Rubik's cube, drama, dance, music, geography, life skills and martial arts - to 105 students in Shanghai.

We supplied professional or language training to 28 English teachers from rural and migrant schools, impacting the English education of about 3,500 more children.

Our I Care Program organised eye screening and eye care awareness training for 44 students from a vocational school in Shanghai, donating spectacles to 23 of them.

About Us

Stepping Stones is a non-profit organisation registered in Shanghai. With a mission to improve the education and general welfare of disadvantaged children in China, Stepping Stones has hosted numerous programs focused on children's education and well-being since 2006. Stepping Stones has hundreds of volunteers who are devoted to helping the children from disadvantaged families in 10 provinces each year. We help children discover the joy of learning a foreign language and digital literacy. We also provide professional training to foreign language teachers.

Our program benefits up to 10,000 students each year, the majority of them attending free weekly lessons. Students who participate in our program show increased interest and confidence in their studies, which improves their access to educational and work opportunities in the future. Additionally, students are exposed to different cultures, and get early exposure to volunteer programs and volunteering spirit.

Our Mission

To improve the education and general welfare of disadvantaged children in China.

Our Vision

Equal access to a quality education and general welfare for all children in China.

Legal Status

In December 2013, Stepping Stones was officially registered in Minhang, Shanghai as a private non-enterprise organisation. Stepping Stones' official Chinese name is 上海闵行区华漕铺路石青少年发展中心 (Shanghai Minhang District Huacao Pulushi Youth Development Centre). Stepping Stones is subject to the laws of the People's Republic of China. Stepping Stones is strictly non-political and non-religious.

Our Values





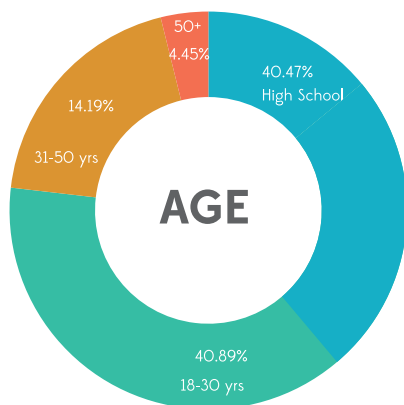
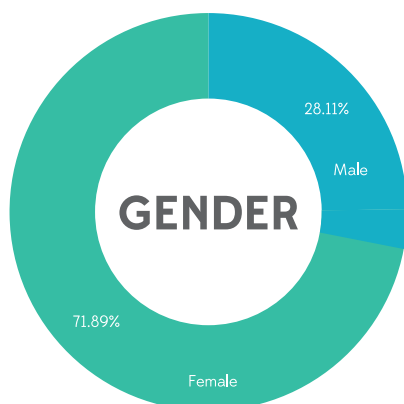
Volunteers

Stepping Stones' greatest asset is its large community of volunteers, who are eager for high-impact volunteering opportunities in China.

Stepping Stones' task is to recruit, train, support, resource and coordinate volunteers to provide services needed by our beneficiaries.

Our volunteers come from all over the world and from many different walks of life, including high school students, university students, company employees and retirees. As well as teaching English and digital literacy to our students, they also take a myriad of other roles, including administration, fundraising, communications, design, photography, curriculum development, volunteer coordination, translation, etc.

In 2021, volunteer groups from high schools and universities played significant roles in our English teaching programs. We are grateful to New York University Shanghai for providing volunteers for our Shanghai English Teaching program, Home Classroom program and Summer Camp, to Yew Chung International School of Shanghai for Shanghai English Teaching program, and to Shanghai Korean School, WLSA Shanghai Academy, Concordia International School Shanghai, Shanghai SMIC Private School, Lucton School Shanghai, North Cross School Shanghai and China Rural Education Initiative of Melbourne University for volunteering for the Home Classroom program.



Beneficiaries

Stepping Stones' main beneficiaries are children and youth who are disadvantaged in terms of access to quality education and resources in China.

Our beneficiaries are as follows:

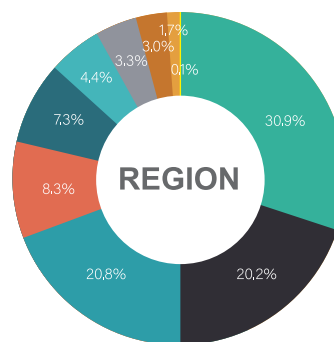
1. Migrant children & youth;
2. Rural children & youth, including many left-behind children and minorities;
3. Children and youth from low-income families in Shanghai and other urban areas;
4. Children and youth with special needs.

While we serve a wide range of disadvantaged children and youth from different locations and backgrounds, the majority of them have been negatively impacted by rural-urban migration in China. Some of these children have moved with their parents to cities where they do not have access to regular public schools due to residence issues, and are enrolled in schools for the children of migrant workers, whose educational standards fall behind the urban public schools. Others are enrolled in public schools, but need extra help with their schoolwork, which their parents are often unable to provide.

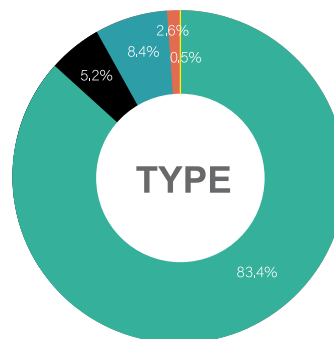
Other migrant workers' children are unable to go with their parents to the cities, and are left behind in rural boarding schools or living with other family members. The educational standards in rural schools lag significantly behind urban schools, and in addition to the disadvantages faced by rural children, these "left-behind" children also lack parental support, especially those in minority areas.

Most of our students are primary-school age, but we also have middle-school, high school and vocational school students. As the number of migrant children decreases in Shanghai, and the educational provision improves for those who remain, we have been approached by local social work organisations to provide educational assistance to other local disadvantaged communities, in particular low-income families and children with special educational needs.

Since 2016, we have increased the impact on our students' English education by providing professional and language training to their English teachers in rural and migrant schools.



Shanghai
 Anhui
 Henan
 Jiangxi
 Yunnan
 Zhejiang
 Fujian
 Guangxi
 Guizhou
 Beijing



Primary school students
 Kindergarten children
 Middle school students
 High school or vocational students
 English teachers

Staff Team

Our staff team, which had remained stable throughout the turbulent year of 2020, encountered significant turnover in 2021, with the departure of seven staff in the first half of the year. Thankfully, after some successful recruitment and restructuring, by the end of 2021, our new team members had settled in well and our team was more efficient than ever, going from 15 paid staff and 1 volunteer staff member at the beginning of the year to 13 paid staff, 1 part-time consultant and 2 volunteer staff at the year end.

Corinne Hua continued to lead the team as Executive Director, with Sebastien Carrier continuing in his role of Program Director remotely, since his family have still been unable to return from Europe. Eva Hua, who has gradually taken increased responsibility on the finance team since she joined us in 2013, was promoted into the role of Operations Director. Our TEFL expert Claire Ding was promoted into the role of Curriculum & Training Director, supported by Sally Wangsawijaya, who moved from program management into a curriculum and training role.

On the program side, Sherry Jia and Julie Li continued to manage our Videolink and HCR programs and Teddy Shi continued to manage the Stepping Up program. Ann Zhao replaced Xiaolan Gao as Manager of our offline English Teaching Programs (Shanghai English Teaching and Rural Individual Volunteering), and Jian Gao took over the internship management role from HR Manager Dora Havassy, as part of a new role of Volunteer Manager, when Dora relocated with her family back to Europe. Ben Hu moved into a part-time consultancy role for our digital literacy program (Stepping Up) as well as continuing to provide us with IT support.

On the support team, Wenjian Tu took over the Finance Officer role from Naya Wang and Ada Xu. Viviana Chen replaced KK Zhu as Communications Manager. We hired Miki Gu as Fundraising Officer, to take over the work of long-term Fundraising Senior Manager Wang Cui, and volunteer Stella Xu took over Dora Havassy's HR duties. Yili Huang continued in her role as Events Manager.

A big welcome to our new staff members and thank you to all of the team for their dedication and commitment in what has been a turbulent year.

Corinne Hua
Sebastien Carrier
Eva Hua
Claire Ding
Sally Wangsawijaya
Sherry Jia
Julie Li
Ann Zhao
Teddy Shi
Jian Gao
Viviana Chen
Yili Huang
Wenjian Tu
Miki Gu
Stella Wu

Executive Director
Program Director
Operations Director
Director of Training & Curriculum
Training & Curriculum Manager
Rural Program Manager
HCR Program Manager
SET & RIV Program Manager
Stepping Up Program Manager
Volunteer & Internship Manager
Communications Manager
Events Manager
Finance Officer
Fundraising Officer
Operations Assistant



Board of Directors



Hua Lei
Chair

HMD (Shanghai) Engineering Consultancy Corp. Ltd. - Vice President



Eva Hua
Vice Chair

Stepping Stones - Operations Director



Whooper Huang
Director

PAAT (Shanghai) IT Co., Ltd. - Partner



Leo Jia
Director

Save the Children in China - Area Manager



Rita Jia
Director

Stepping Stones - Volunteer



Wang Lin
Supervisor

BSR Advisory Services Ltd. - Director



Steve Pan
Supervisor

PricewaterhouseCoopers Zhong Tian LLP - Partner



Aaron Xin
Supervisor

O'Melveny & Myers - Senior Legal Counsel

English Teaching

English is the third most important subject in the Chinese school curriculum after Chinese and maths, and the one that poses the most challenges to rural and other disadvantaged children, due to lack of access to adequate English language learning resources. Lack of attainment in English skills restricts educational and employment opportunities for these children. Stepping Stones' work began in response to requests from the principals of migrant schools in Shanghai and rural Chinese schools to teach English to their students.

Shanghai English Teaching

2021 was a good year for our offline English Teaching Program in Shanghai, though there were various challenges. Besides traditional lessons, our volunteers delivered drama, movie dubbing and silent movie story-telling lessons in line with our new curriculum structure, which brought more fun, interaction and speaking opportunities to the students.

The program also increased in scope and scale. Our volunteers delivered 2,149 English lessons to 1,358 disadvantaged children at 22 project sites. While we continued to increase our interventions in community centres, we were finally able to resume two of our long-term migrant school programs. We were also pleased to continue our English lessons to children with special needs at Shanghai Qingcongquan Training Centre as well as vocational oral English courses to young adults at Shanghai Young Bakers and Shanghai K Foundation.

One of the highlights was to expand the reach of our programs to serve preschool children in three kindergartens. We also linked up our vocational school students with the kids from our partner community centres, the youth providing baking classes to the kids, which was beneficial to both parties.



Students



Volunteer Teachers



Teaching Sites



Lessons



Rural Volunteering Program



Volunteer Teachers



Students



Teaching Sites



Lessons

Our plans to send volunteers to teach in rural areas were severely impacted by the pandemic, with many programs or projects canceled or postponed. Despite all the challenges and uncertainties, we were able to send seven individual volunteers to four rural teaching sites in Henan, Anhui and Fujian and they taught 332 English classes to 638 students who welcomed our creative teaching methods.

In the spring, even with the pandemic, we were able to send one volunteer from Macao to teach for about three months in a rural school in Anhui Huaiyuan. It was a huge help to the school, which was facing a shortage of resources.

In the summer, we sent a French mother and daughter with the daughter's two friends and another volunteer from El Salvador to Xiamen to provide oral English classes to local migrant kids at Xiamen Tong'an Charity Library and Xiamen Bird's Nest Reading and Culture Promotion Center. Their hosts said, "Stepping Stones English Classes increased students' interest and confidence in speaking English."

In the winter, one volunteer working for a multi-national company made use of her annual leave to teach English to left-behind children at a village school in Henan Luyi for three weeks. The local kids were very happy to see a volunteer in person again after a long break due to the pandemic. "This is good for our students. You bring different teaching approaches here." said Principal Liu gratefully.



School Videolink Program



Volunteer Teachers



Students



Teaching Sites



Lessons

In 2021, Stepping Stones' School Videolink Program expanded to more remote areas and reached more students, mostly left-behind children in rural areas. Many of them live with their grandparents, because their parents have migrated to the cities for work. In 2021, the program expanded to 22 teaching sites in Anhui, Fujian, Guangxi, Henan, Jiangxi and Yunnan, and we started teaching more students from ethnic minority groups at new program sites in Yunnan and Guangxi.

At the same time, we continued to review and update the teaching materials in order to ensure their relevance and applicability. We continued to use entry-level courseware developed by our Curriculum Director for beginner-level students, while using other level-appropriate textbooks for other students. For the first time, we prepared student books, which summarised all the course content for their level, helping them to gain new insights by reviewing material that they have covered, and making our teaching material more systemized and comprehensive. Next year, we plan to launch a pilot project of talking pens combined with smart students' books, so that students without access to the Internet can review the audio in the student books and practise their pronunciation.

We continued to cooperate with Jiangxi Xin'gan Education Bureau as well as other non-profit organisations such as Chi-Heng Foundation, Xiamen Bird's Nest Library and Shanghai Shine Social Work Development Centre to provide online English classes to children at five primary schools in Yunnan, Henan and Guangxi. In 2022, we plan to open videolink classes at two new primary schools in Yunnan Lincang, in cooperation with Shanghai Shine Social Work Development Centre, and two new primary schools in some small towns in Jiangxi Xin'gan in cooperation with Jiangxi Xin'gan Education Bureau.

In 2021, we started a new partnership with Jiangxi Youth's Public Welfare Development Center to provide Videolink English lessons to students at a primary school in Nanchang. We are actively preparing for the opening of classes in two new schools next year.

Special thanks to Bloomberg for providing funding for our School Videolink Program, as well as many employee volunteers, who are teaching our students in Yunnan, Jiangxi, and Henan. We are also grateful to Texas Instruments for organising staff from multiple offices to teach students in Henan.



Home Classroom Program

In 2021, Home Classroom (HCR) English Online Program continued to develop steadily and kept expanding its influence under the condition of regular epidemic prevention and control.

We carried out 3 courses during the spring semester, summer holiday and fall semester in 42 township primary schools in Henan, Jiangxi, Zhejiang and Anhui Provinces. With the commitment of 265 volunteers, we provided 3,261 lessons for 1,514 students.

To ensure the good quality of the teaching, we maintained a small class size, with one teaching volunteer to four to eight students, and each student having one 30-minute lesson per week. Our objective is to develop students' English listening and speaking skills as well as encouraging students to listen attentively and speak confidently while interacting with teachers. Students could browse key points through preview videos before each class, and concentrate on English situational training, listening and speaking skills practice. After class, students submitted their homework through the online platform, where students and teaching volunteers maintained efficient communication and interaction, which aroused students' interests and enthusiasm in learning and using English. According to mid-course and post-course survey feedback, most of the surveyed students and parents valued the HCR Program very highly and hoped to participate in our English course in the long term.

We adjusted the HCR course mode and teaching time according to the new educational policies that came out in the summer. We put into use new teaching resources and materials, including 120 regular courseware, 18 story-reading courseware and corresponding worksheets after assessing students' English listening and speaking level. We are very grateful to ClassIn for providing us with a professional integrated online teaching platform and more powerful teaching support system from September. It enhanced class activity and students' interest in listening and speaking, and provided students with a more effective and professional online course experience.

We expanded the scope and scale of volunteer recruitment, recruiting more teaching and coordinating volunteers among international high school students in Shanghai and students studying abroad. All the volunteers received online training covering teaching plans, teaching regulations, platform usage and so on. In addition, we organised online meetings to communicate with volunteers regularly.

In 2022, we plan to further expand the scale of student recruitment and provide online English courses for more disadvantaged children. We will refresh course resources and add more fun content to provide teaching volunteers with sufficient teaching materials. What's more, we will compile a comprehensive handbook for volunteers to help them understand their job responsibilities more easily and participate in voluntary work efficiently.



1,514
Students



265
Volunteer Teachers



3,261
Lessons

Curriculum Development

By the end of 2021, thanks to the sponsorship of Shanghai Charity Foundation, our curriculum development team delivered 24 new packages of level 1 lesson PPTs and homework sheets. We updated the syllabus to include more topics and designed the lesson PPTs to be more interactive and communicative. After successfully piloting PPT based lesson plans for our Shanghai English Teaching program (SET) in 2020, we adopted a makeshift solution for the fall semester by adapting 60 School Videolink (SVL) Program's PPTs for offline teaching.

Over the years, we were often asked if we could offer phonics classes to students to help improve their pronunciation, but until 2021, we hadn't figured out a good product that is suitable for volunteers to facilitate in class. Jessie Sullivan and Isla Iago, two teachers from Huili School, raised funds for 60 phonics teaching videos and worksheets for our students, which they designed and produced themselves. In these videos, Jessie and Isla demonstrated the mouth shape of the sounds, led students to trace the letters and introduced contextualized sentences that contain the sound. After a successful pilot of these videos in our summer camps, extending to both online and offline use in the fall semester, we are planning to make these resources available to our SVL partner schools in 2022.

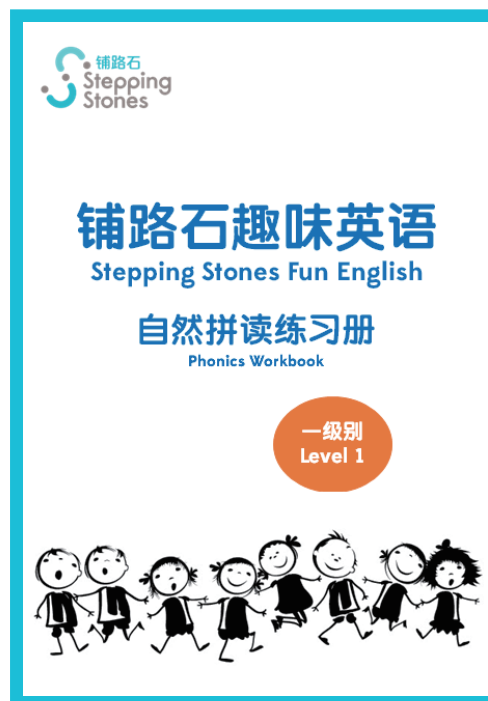
In 2021, we continued to edit 18 story reading PPTs for our Home Classroom (HCR) summer program after positive feedback from students and volunteers about this course in 2020. We are going to create nine more PPTs for our 2022 summer program.

We designed two drama lessons for our 2021 SET summer camp, which led us naturally to creating more drama- and movie-related teaching materials after the 'double reduction' policy came out in the summer. By the end of 2021, we managed to source 36 lessons for Grades 3 to 5 that focus on drama activities, movie dubbing and short silent movie storytelling. Three student workbooks of 12 lessons each were also created with the support of Shanghai Soong Ching Ling Foundation. For the lower levels, we handpicked 24 catchy English songs to go with the regular English lessons.

In 2021, we continued to develop the absolute beginners' SVL PPTs that we initiated in 2020. We created 14 PPTs and an introductory video to make it a full set.

In response to the requests for English Corner classes for some older beneficiaries from our partner schools and community centres, we developed an online English Corner package which consists of 20 lesson PPTs, 10 for low levels and 10 for high, in an SVL format. Two feedback forms were designed for students as well as volunteers to help us gauge the effectiveness of the PPTs.

When we decided to migrate our teaching platform to ClassIn, we mobilised our staff and interns to convert 60 SVL PPTs and 60 HCR PPTs to fit the ClassIn format within a very short period of time.

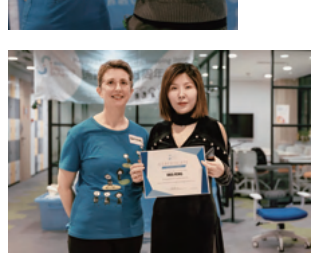


Volunteer Training

In 2021, we continued to conduct training sessions to new and returning volunteers, equipping them with the necessary knowledge and skills to deliver engaging and impactful classes to our students. With schools and community centres re-opening in 2021, we were able to conduct ten offline training sessions and three online briefings for 196 volunteers teaching in the SET program, as well as 86 site visits throughout the year. Thanks to Simon Harrold, Stepping Stones' long-term volunteer and board member, we organised a workshop on the topic of best practices in facilitating classroom activities. We also ran four trainings for seven Rural Individual Volunteering (RIV) program volunteers in 2021.

We conducted 150 individual demo classes for our online programs. Around 240 HCR volunteers and 140 SVL volunteers attended the demo classes. In addition, 19 online volunteer observation and feedback sessions were conducted to further support volunteers to improve their teaching skills. As we migrated our teaching platform from ZOOM to ClassIn, training videos were updated to include information on how to use our new teaching platform and lesson PPTs.

Our training and curriculum development team members also helped to cover online and offline classes throughout the year.





English Teacher Training



Teachers Trained



Teachers' English
Corners



Training Sessions

After having to postpone our Shanghai English Teacher Training last year due to the epidemic, we were pleased this year to be able to deliver our English Teacher Training program, sponsored by Jiaqi Foundation. Our teacher trainer Dawn Chang delivered eight lessons over the course of the year to seven teachers at Taoyuan School, a school for the children of migrant workers in Jiading District, Shanghai.

The course was tailored according to the findings of a needs assessment, which was conducted at the beginning of the Spring term, and included the following modules: the use of technology in class, error correction, use of English in the classroom, English related learning activities and games, English communication techniques, lesson planning, and finding English teaching resources.

Each of the trainees had the opportunity to deliver at least one demo class to the trainer and receive feedback and advice. The trainees particularly appreciated the personalised aspect of the training, as well as the provision of new and interesting teaching resources and activities, and the opportunity to practise their English skills.

The same needs assessment conducted at another school for the children of migrant workers in Jiading revealed that the English teachers lacked the confidence in their English to speak it in the classroom. This is a common problem for English teachers, who often have no opportunities to practise their English skills after leaving college. Volunteer Jody Yan provided a lunchtime English corner for English teachers at this school, giving them a welcome and rare opportunity to practice their oral English with a native speaker. 13 English teachers from Henan and Jiangxi also attended online our English corners. In total, 14 English corners were delivered by our volunteers in 2021.

Thank you to Jiaqi Foundation, our trainer and our volunteers for providing training opportunities to English teachers in Shanghai's migrant schools and rural schools, helping to improve the quality of English teaching in the classrooms.

Digital Literacy



Teachers



Teaching Sites



Lessons



Volunteers



Students

We can hardly live without the Internet these days. Digital Literacy is basic for survival in the modern world. But unfortunately, many disadvantaged children and youth in China have no computers at home and are attending schools that do not provide computer classes.

The objective of our digital literacy program is to help disadvantaged students improve their digital literacy and life skills, and to increase their self-esteem, critical thinking and confidence in order to optimize their access to appropriate further education and to better work opportunities in the future. This program equips students with a wide array of skills - such as Microsoft Office, resume preparation, online searching, online safety, programming, coding and embedded system design - so that they are better prepared to meet the challenges of a tech-focused society.

In 2021, thanks to the support of many individual donors, private foundations and corporate partners, our teachers and volunteers were able to teach 780 lessons to more than 1,081 students at 18 online or offline teaching sites in Shanghai, Zhejiang, Beijing and Henan, as well as at hundreds of students' homes through the internet.

We would like to extend our thanks to a growing number of local and international partners - in particular Transparent Fish Fund and Ping & Amy Chao Family Foundation, PwC, L'Oréal, Texas Instruments, EP Academy, Teensgeeker, Gengyuan Education, Concordia International School, Shanghai Fudan University, East China Normal University, East China University of Political Science and Law, New York University (Shanghai) and Byte Dance. In addition to supporting us through funding and/or donation of equipment, many of our corporate partners - such as L'Oréal, PwC and Texas Instruments - have also contributed to our program by encouraging their employees to volunteer with us. In total we mobilized 133 volunteers in 2021.

One of our major achievements in 2021 is to have launched small-class programming courses in an increased number of community centers in Shanghai. Through project-based graphical programming, our students have become more confident in exploring the possibilities computing has to offer. All our new courses have been warmly welcomed by students, parents and community leaders.

As was the case in 2020, our online digital literacy program experienced a great increase in 2021. With the help of volunteers from PwC, we developed mobile-friendly online courses to reach disadvantaged children in remote areas of China. Courses include "Hour of Coding", "Xmind Mind Map" and "Canva Resume Making". Short educational videos on a wide range of digital literacy-related topics have also been produced by our team and volunteers in 2021 to enhance the quality of the lessons provided to our beneficiaries.



Summer Camp

This year was the fourth year for Stepping Stones to proudly accept the trust of the Huacao Town Youth League and successfully hold a six-week full-time summer camp. Thanks to our volunteers and interns, 105 students had a safe, fulfilling, meaningful and enjoyable summer.

This year, two teachers helped manage the summer camp, one of whom was a local English teacher who had previously participated in Stepping Stones' English Teacher Training. We took the Silk Road as the theme of this year's summer camp, and trained volunteers provided geography and history classes, reading classes, and picture book reading classes relating to the theme. One volunteer gave a Rubik's Cube class at the summer camp, which was very well received by students and parents.

At the end of the summer camp, the children were proud and happy to showcase what they had learned during the summer camp through song, poetry, dance and drama performances for their parents, volunteers and teachers. The children said that our summer camp was exciting, and that they had had a great summer holiday. The parents were very grateful to the volunteers and teachers for their hard work and hoped that their children could join the summer camp provided by Stepping Stones next year.



Students



Volunteer Teachers



Lessons



Teaching Sites



I Care



Spectacles Donated

Rural and migrant Chinese children have roughly the same levels of myopia and other vision issues as urban children, but their parents rarely buy glasses or fund corrective surgery or treatment for lack of funds and medical insurance, and above all lack of understanding of the importance of correcting poor vision. Studies show that vision problems can seriously impact a child's educational success. We have witnessed a sudden improvement in the grades of children receiving glasses or eye care treatment through our I Care Project.

At the end of 2021, 44 students from Shanghai Young Bakers participated in our I Care project. The ophthalmologists from Shanghai Ai'Er Eye Hospital ran eye tests for them and provided 23 eyeglasses for those who are short-sighted. Ophthalmologists also gave an interactive lesson to the students on eye health. Students benefitted a lot from the lesson and improved their understanding of vision correction as well as the importance of wearing glasses.



Our Volunteer Stories

By Cai Yihuai

Hi, I'm Cai Yihuai. How time flies! I just realised that I have been volunteering at Stepping Stones for several years now.



From my very first contact, I was impressed by the enthusiasm and hard work of all the staff members. From the founder Corinne to colleagues in various departments, everyone is super professional and efficient with their work even though it's a non-profit charity organisation.

I still remember the first volunteer English teacher training I attended. Faced with international volunteers with relatively little teaching experience but great enthusiasm, Director of Training & Curriculum Claire used a fun fabricated word activity to simulate the language learning process. Every trainee was able to experience how rural children with limited English proficiency would feel when interacting with native English-speaking volunteers, and how volunteers could employ better teaching strategies to facilitate learning. Meanwhile, the rest of the team were working hard to organise fundraising events and file grant applications. That was the moment when I realized how challenging it is for a non-profit organisation to operate.

Before the pandemic, I participated in the English teaching volunteer activities at Shanghai migrant schools. Our English classes every week were always full of joy and laughter. The lesson plans prepared by Stepping Stones were very specific and clear, and I would also add some fun in-class activities based on the language level of the children. Because I was relatively more experienced in teaching, and a native-Chinese speaker, I was partnered with less experienced international volunteers so that we could complement each others' strengths.

The children were always around us after class, chatting with us and trying to express themselves in English. Their increasing passion for English is what makes me come back again and again to Stepping Stones.

After the pandemic hit, Stepping Stones quickly adjusted its curriculum and provided online courses for a larger number of rural children in need. In the past two years, I have seen the curriculum development team spending a lot of time and effort on continuously improving and enriching the course contents. The PPT slides have become more and more interactive, and the teaching materials are getting more and more enriched.

I also had the opportunity to interact online with children from small towns and villages in Jiangxi and Henan, and introduced some interesting English learning methods and resources to their parents. Although online, the children rarely asked for leave and tried their best to interact with us.

Now I'm participating in designing English reading lessons. I'm testing out my lesson plans with my own two kids and hope that I'll create interesting lessons that students will enjoy.

I am very happy to have this opportunity to follow and witness the development of Stepping Stones. I hope that this dedicated non-profit organisation will grow and prosper, providing more rural children with access to external education resources.





By Daniela Wei

Hi, my name is Daniela. I'm a journalist working for a business media firm, and also mother of a two-year-old.

My daily work requires communication with people from many different backgrounds, and this makes me eager to spend time after work communicating with kids who are creative, frank, and sincere. I spend most of my spare time with my daughter, reading picture books and playing games with her. Observing how she acquires new language skills every day, I feel that there is no better return on investment than spending time with kids.

My employer works with NGOs worldwide to help people in need and offers a wide range of volunteering opportunities for us to join during our working hours. Education is definitely my real passion, so all my volunteer hours in past years were spent with children or teenagers in China or elsewhere.

Three years ago, I applied for the first time to become a volunteer for Stepping Stones' School Videolink Program, teaching kids English remotely. It was such a rewarding experience: I asked everybody to stand up and shout out the words, hoping they could feel more joy of learning through a relaxed teaching style. The internet sometimes was poor, so I couldn't always hear what they said, but I could see them waving their arms, laughing, and shouting, which was a wonderful experience for me.

I thought about them from time to time in the past years and wondered how they were doing, whether they still studied English. So, when I saw Stepping Stones' volunteer recruitment again last autumn, I signed up again, with an aim to get to know the kids more.

It was still a very happy experience watching a group of 10-year-old kids reading out loud, but I have to admit to having more mixed feelings this time than three years ago. This time, the school was in Yunnan Province, and the internet access was so poor that often I could barely hear them, so I couldn't tell if they read the words right, which was obviously very frustrating and made me wonder how much the kids could learn from the class.

When the semester was finished, I told the school teacher that I wanted to order some English books for the kids. I ordered online and those books were split into three parcels. When I got the message from the logistics company that the first parcel arrived, I checked with the teacher if she received it. The teacher said she would wait till all three parcels arrived before picking them up together, as the post office is a 30km return journey by foot from the village. I was very shocked and felt a bit guilty because I just took it for granted that parcels would be delivered to everyone's door.

Then I told the teacher that I wanted to share some study tips with those children, and offered to make some recordings of myself teaching how to read the English books I sent them. The teacher appeared very happy at first but when I suggested that she could share those videos with all the parents so that the kids could study at home, she said something that shocked me even more.

"You have already seen that these children are facing multiple challenges, such as the poor internet and the long distance to the town. But these are nothing compared with the biggest issue they are facing. The toughest thing for them is that most parents here either don't care about their children's education at all or are not capable of caring for their learning. Some are working in other cities and only see the kids once a year, while some mothers got pregnant by accident at a very young age, so are definitely not mature enough to raise a kid. Without parental support, it's hard for external help to reach to the students."

This upset me a lot, but after further reflection, I actually appreciate programs like School Videolink even more, because in a situation where educational resources are unevenly distributed, people are still supporting these children, in spite of all the difficulties and challenges. Life isn't easy for them, but they can see people thousands of miles away working together to help them.

It's my honour to participate in the program, and I will continue to discuss with Stepping Stones and the school about how to provide more effective help to them. I know that they are doing their best to work with the school to improve the internet connection issue. I firmly believe in the power of sharing and believe that the efforts from a group of people who truly care about education will eventually pay off.





By Fátima Arévalo

My name is Fátima Arévalo. I'm from El Salvador, and since September 2019, I started to study international economics and trade at Shanghai University of International Business and Economics.

When I first started volunteering with Stepping Stones, I had no idea if I could do it. I was not a teacher and had never worked with kids before, but I wanted to do something worthwhile with my time. From the beginning, the Stepping Stones team really supported me. The training really helped me to understand how to manage my class and the teaching resources and materials available were all I needed to provide the children with a fun and dynamic lesson, in which they could practice English without feeling that they were back in school.

At first, I was nervous, but as time passed by I started understanding what my class needed, and what activities they liked. In my first semester, I was with a group of 6th graders. I remember how the kids loved to compete with each other, and through small competitions, I not only managed to make all the kids participate but also got to see their abilities, correct them when needed and teach them new things. As I've been gaining more experience as a teacher, I've realised that more than teaching, my goal is to encourage the kids to practice the language, to get excited by it, and little by little gain confidence in themselves and their abilities.

One of the most amazing experiences was when I went to Xiamen for the summer program. I was the only volunteer going, and I had to teach two groups of about twenty kids. Stepping Stones supported me every step of the way, supplying me with transportation, accommodation, teaching materials, lesson plans, songs, and videos, which allowed me to deliver quality lessons. In one class I had students with different levels and learning needs. Some of them spoke more fluently than the others, so I did different activities, sang songs and watched videos, in order to include all the children, and helped them to get excited by the language, to shed their shyness and speak a little bit of English in class.

I remember very fondly each and every one of my students. There was a little girl in Xiamen, she was really sweet and curious, and she wanted to know everything about my country, my culture, what we eat, what we like to do, what I do in Shanghai. And once I told her I was learning Chinese back in Shanghai, she grabbed one of her books and started reading alongside me all the characters, to help me to improve my Chinese. My three weeks in Xiamen was a really rewarding and fulfilling experience that I will carry with me my whole life.

I have been a volunteer for more than a year now. Sometimes I feel frustrated or overwhelmed, but as I start to have fun with the children and try to really understand what methods and activities will get them excited in learning English, there is no negative feeling left, just the satisfaction and hope of making at least a tiny contribution to the education of young minds.

One thing I know, I wouldn't be here in this wonderful city and have the opportunities I have if I hadn't learned English. The work that Stepping Stones is doing to improve the education of migrant children is admirable and really inspires me to do a better job each and every time. Every child has the right to quality education and to equal opportunities no matter their background or social status, and I am glad to be part of an organisation that shares this ideal.



Fundraising

In 2021, we launched our online fundraising campaign on Shanghai United Foundation's Monthly Donation platform. Monthly Donation is a low cost, sustainable way for people to crowd fund for non-profit organisations. After signing up as a "Little Stone", donors who have registered their emails with us will receive a monthly report on the current status of the program and recent achievements of our students. In the first year of this campaign we attracted 94 donors, raising CNY 22,255 from monthly donations and CNY 17,882 from one-time donations, totally CNY 40,137. We will continue to share transparently with Stepping Stones' loyal supporters every bit of progress and growth of our organisation and our students.

We also continued to raise funds for our School Videolink Program on GlobalGiving, one of the largest fund-raising platforms in the world, as well as launching the Stepping Up Program on the same platform, which will help us to raise awareness on the education of digital skills for disadvantaged children and young adults.

Despite recurring waves of the pandemic, we managed to hold one offline fundraising event, while strictly following local COVID-19 guidelines. We held our "Under the Same Starry Sky" fundraising event on the evening of Saturday 5th June, during which we raised a total of CNY 1,238,495, thanks to the generosity of the participants.

In December 2021, Chairman of the Board of Directors Hua Lei donated his architectural watercolour paintings for the purpose of fundraising. His artwork was warmly received by our supporters, who were also glad to contribute to the education of underprivileged children. Up to the year end, income arising from Hua Lei's watercolour donations totaled CNY 22,894, which will be used to fund our operations. This fundraising campaign will continue in 2022.

We are sincerely grateful to every foundation, company, association and individual that has given their generous support, thanks to which we are able to continue providing quality-service to the children. A donor list can be found on the Donors Page.



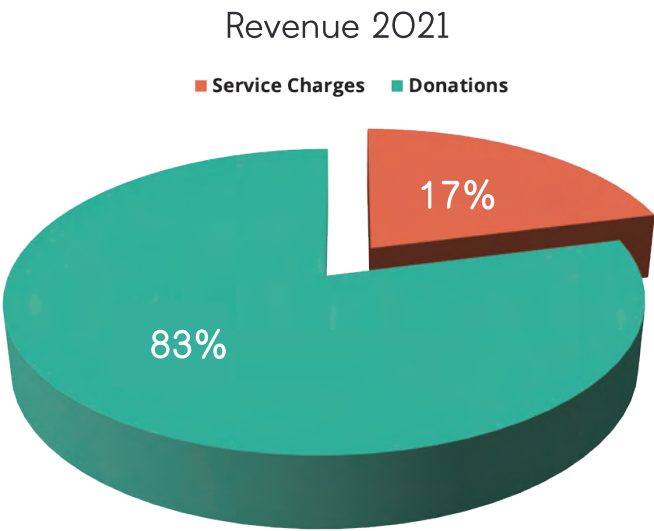
Scan QR below to become our monthly donor.

Finance

In 2021, Stepping Stones' revenue was CNY 3,296,050.02, and expenses were CNY 2,717,265.05, making a net gain of CNY 578,784.97.

The opening balance was CNY 489,671.15 and the closing balance was CNY 1,071,804.57.

Stepping Stones' accounts are audited annually by an independent accountant.



Revenue (CNY)	
Donations	2,733,031.23
Service Charges	519,552.55
Government Subsidies	43,466.24
TOTAL	3,296,050.02

Expenses (CNY)	
Operational Costs	2,485,479.61
Accommodation	19,088.00
Communications	18,775.65
Labour Costs	42,547.50
Meals	141,300.10
Medical Costs	7,778.71
Miscellaneous Costs	1,800.20
Office and Training Space	294,592.80
Office Equipment & Supplies	24,706.06
Professional Fees & Insurance	33,679.80
Salary & Bonus	1,478,441.82
Social Security & Housing Fund	300,620.90
Teaching Materials	22,065.97
Transport	100,082.10
Management Costs	229,522.94
Labour Costs	20,000.00
Meals	29,035.91
Office Supplies	6,414.05
Salary	114,769.07
Social Security & Housing Fund	31,277.60
Tax & Others	2,237.18
Transport	9,315.23
Welfare	16,473.90
Fundraising Cost	2,262.50
TOTAL	2,717,265.05
NET GAIN	578,784.97

Donors

Thank you to everyone who donated to Stepping Stones in 2021. Every donation of whatever size is always appreciated.

Donor	Amount (CNY)
Shanghai Soong Ching Ling Foundation	500,000.00
Donations received through Shanghai United Foundation (SUF)	383,063.48
Airbnb (through Global Giving)	321,151.95
The Columbus Foundation Fund (through Stepping Stones China Ltd)	160,421.81
Transparent Fish Fund (through Stepping Stones China Ltd)	128,337.44
GlobalGiving (Accelerator Crowd-Funding Campaign)	115,667.15
Ms Joy Qiao	110,000.00
Wellington College Parents group	104,990.00
Mr Heinz Gerhard Oidtmann	70,000.00
Ms Frances Zhang & Mr Elton Huang	64,500.00
Target (through Stepping Stones China Ltd)	63,885.75
Ms Jasmine Wu	50,000.00
Ms Lau Kit Ling & Mr Wan Yun Bor	50,000.00
Ms Maja & Mr Titus von dem Bongart	50,000.00
Ms Yiwei Wu	50,000.00
Mr Michael Han	45,000.00
Mr William Tenison	45,000.00
Shanghai Charity Foundation	37,200.00
Christmas 2021 Charity Auction	33,706.73
Ms Wang Hui	30,000.00
Homeslice Pizza	28,587.54
Ms Rita Jia	26,000.00
Mr Eric Lee	24,000.00
Ms May Zhou	21,000.00
Mr Daniel Zhao	16,000.00
Brits Abroad	10,000.00
Mr Eric Zeng	10,000.00
Mr Xie Tao	10,000.00
Scottish Alumni	10,000.00
Shanghai Expatriate Community	8,050.00
Other Donations	176,866.70
Tax paid on donations	-20,397.32
DONATIONS SUB-TOTAL	2,733,031.23

In addition to the cash donations listed above, we are also especially grateful to the following donors, whose valuable donations to our fundraising auction generated some of the major donations listed above: JIAXI International Art Center, Ms Sunny Wu, IRIS Jewelry, Team Education Consulting, Ms Wu Yiwei, DDC.

In addition, Shanghai United Foundation (SUF) received the following donations on behalf of Stepping Stones in 2021

Donor	Amount (CNY)
Prof. Fan Gang	200,000.00
Texas Instruments Shanghai	122,472.00
Anonymous	100,000.00
Ms Frances Zhang & Mr Elton Huang	80,000.00
Shanghai Xingzhou Information Technology Corp	50,000.00
Ms Stephanie Cheng & Mr Nat Alexander	50,000.00
Ms Christina Ye & Mr Walker James Wallace III	32,000.00
Homeslice Pizza	29,944.05
Ms Lily Liu & Mr Kang Saibo	20,000.00
Mr George Liu	10,000.00
Other Donations	68,136.23
SUF DONATIONS SUB-TOTAL	762,552.28

Thank you to the following program partners for their financial support.

Corporate Partner	Service Charge (CNY)
Tiny Tots Education Group	292,500.00
Anonymous	81,056.94
Huacao government	63,313.00
Shanghai Shine Social Work Development Centre	30,000.00
Shanghai New York University	19,978.13
Yew Chung International School Shanghai	15,000.00
El Fuego	10,400.00
Joyview Education	10,000.00
Other service charges	2,500.00
Tax paid on service charges	-5,195.52
SERVICE CHARGES SUB-TOTAL	519,552.55

Donors



上海宋庆龄基金会
Shanghai Soong Ching Ling Foundation



上海联劝公益基金会
SHANGHAI UNITED FOUNDATION



Pro Bono Supporters

A special thank you to the following companies, who generously contributed high quality professional services to us for free, thus helping us to significantly reduce our operational costs and improve the quality of our programs.



Eden Jewelry, EP Academy, Gengyuan Education, Teensgeeker for providing teaching resources.



EEO for providing us with a professional integrated online teaching platform ClassIn.



Homeslice Pizza, who generously provided refreshments for important meetings.



Lihui Consulting, and CONNEN Consulting and Coaching Co. Ltd for professional consulting and coaching services respectively.



Mingdao for providing an office management solutions platform.



Nisseiwell for printing services.



O' Melveny & Myers LLP for professional legal services.



PricewaterhouseCoopers for curriculum design services.

Rödl & Partner



Smart Culture for event design & management services.



Wellington College Shanghai for sponsoring the development of phonics videos and workbooks.

Non-Profit Partners

Stepping Stones is proud to have partnerships with many well-known community organisations, as follows:



Sangzi Library



Looking Forward

What we are looking forward to most, along with the rest of the world, is an end to disruption from the epidemic. Unfortunately, at the beginning of 2022, with China sticking to a zero-covid policy, that prospect is still highly uncertain. We look forward to the day that we can return to our pre-covid activity levels, especially offline corporate events and sending volunteers to teach in rural areas.

In the coming years, we know that most of the private schools for rural and migrant children where we teach will close, as the government plans to have a higher proportion of Chinese students enrolled in public education. We will work with the public schools to offer our services to help those children who need extra support, whether they are from migrant families, low income local families or children with special educational needs.

We are also working on building a stronger community of Stepping Stones volunteers in Shanghai, with occasional events to promote a sense of belonging. At the same time, we will need to continue to work hard on fundraising, which is also impacted by the epidemic.

We look forward very much to your continued support in 2022.



Impact Report

Every year, we undertake impact evaluations to collect information about our programs and to assess the impacts produced by our online and offline interventions. In 2021, evaluations were conducted using two different methodologies. First, consistent with previous years' evaluations, 'pre-program' (or baseline) and 'post-program' (or follow-up) survey questionnaires were distributed to a sample of our beneficiaries. The questions on the surveys assessed students' and teachers' abilities, knowledge, skills, and interests both before and after completing our programs. This was done to ensure comparisons could be made, and the impact of our programs could be evaluated in more depth. Second, pre- and post-speaking assessments were conducted at six sites in Shanghai, China to evaluate students' progression in English.

English Programs

We have been running English Teaching Programs in China for more than 15 years, serving thousands of children every week. The main objectives of our English programs are to increase students' self-esteem, motivation, and confidence in English, and to better prepare students for their key English examinations. The purpose of this impact evaluation is to assess whether these objectives have been met and if there are areas for improvement.

Pre- and post-program survey questionnaires were distributed to a sample of 509 students to assess the impact of our online and offline English programs. The questions in the surveys focused on the students' attitudes towards school, English and other key subjects, and the Stepping Stones program they engaged with. The data that is discussed in this section includes data collected in 2021 from our Home Classroom, School Videolink and Shanghai English Teaching programs.

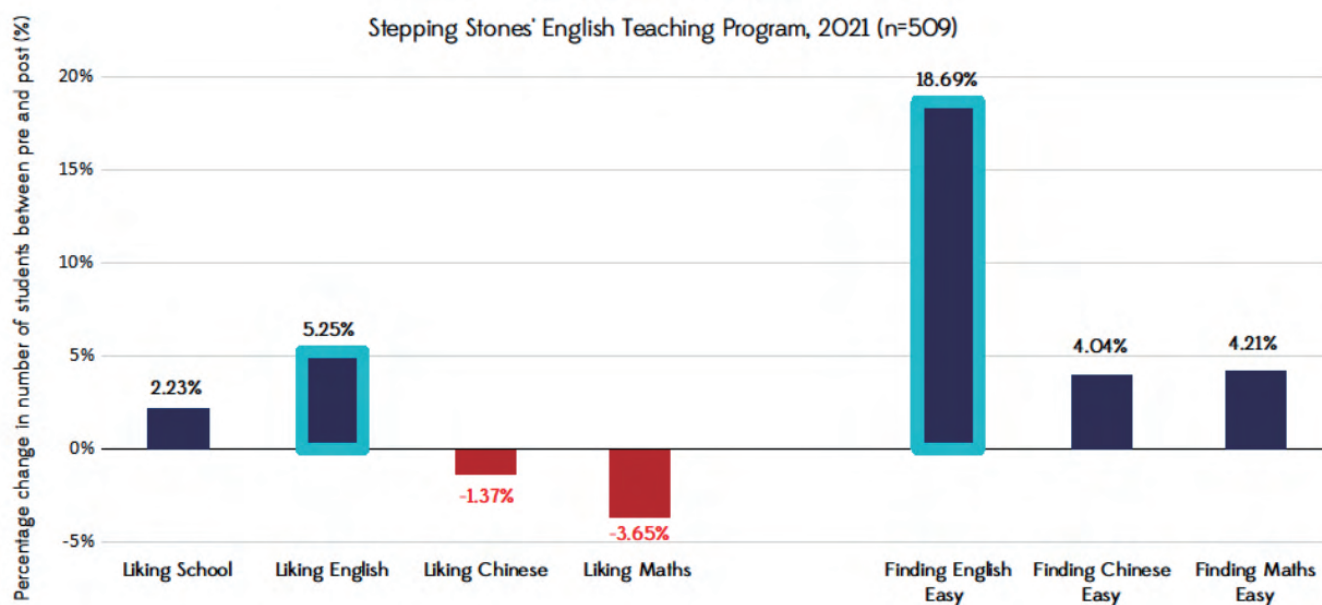
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Impacting students' attitudes towards English

To assess whether our objectives of increasing students' motivation and self-esteem in English were met, students were asked their opinions on not only English but also on other core subjects, as well as their opinions on school more broadly. The students were asked whether they liked English, Chinese and Maths, and whether they thought these subjects were difficult. They were asked to rank their views on a 4-point Likert scale with response choices ranging from 'disliking' to 'liking very much', or from 'difficult' to 'very easy'. Such questions were asked so that changes in students' attitudes towards English throughout the program could be compared with other subjects that did not receive our interventions.

The results show that the greatest improvement in attitudes was towards English in comparison to the other core subjects (see Figure below), which is consistent with the findings from previous years. There was a 5.25% increase in the number of children who expressed a liking for English (from 86.56% to 91.11%) and an 18.69% increase in the number of children who found English easy (from 63.06% to 74.85%). As English is where our interventions are focused, it can be suggested that our programs have a positive impact on students' attitudes towards English. Such positive attitudes can be translated to an increased motivation to work hard, which results in better English attainment and thus improving prospects.

Changes in Students' Attitudes towards English and Other Subjects: Pre and Post Program Comparison



It is interesting to note the massive percentage increase in the number of students finding English easy compared to their other subjects. For English, this percentage increase was 18.69% compared to 4.04% increase in Chinese and 4.21% increase in Maths. This data is encouraging as it shows that more students have an increased positive attitude towards English after our interventions.

Another observation worth mentioning is the percentage decrease of students liking Chinese (-1.37%) and Maths (-3.65%), in comparison to English. These subjects did not receive any extra support or intervention. This data suggests that while interventions led to improvements in attitudes, subjects that do not receive the same support can lead to a decrease in attitudes. Our students may benefit from the extra intervention in Chinese and Maths in the same way that they have benefitted in English from our programs.

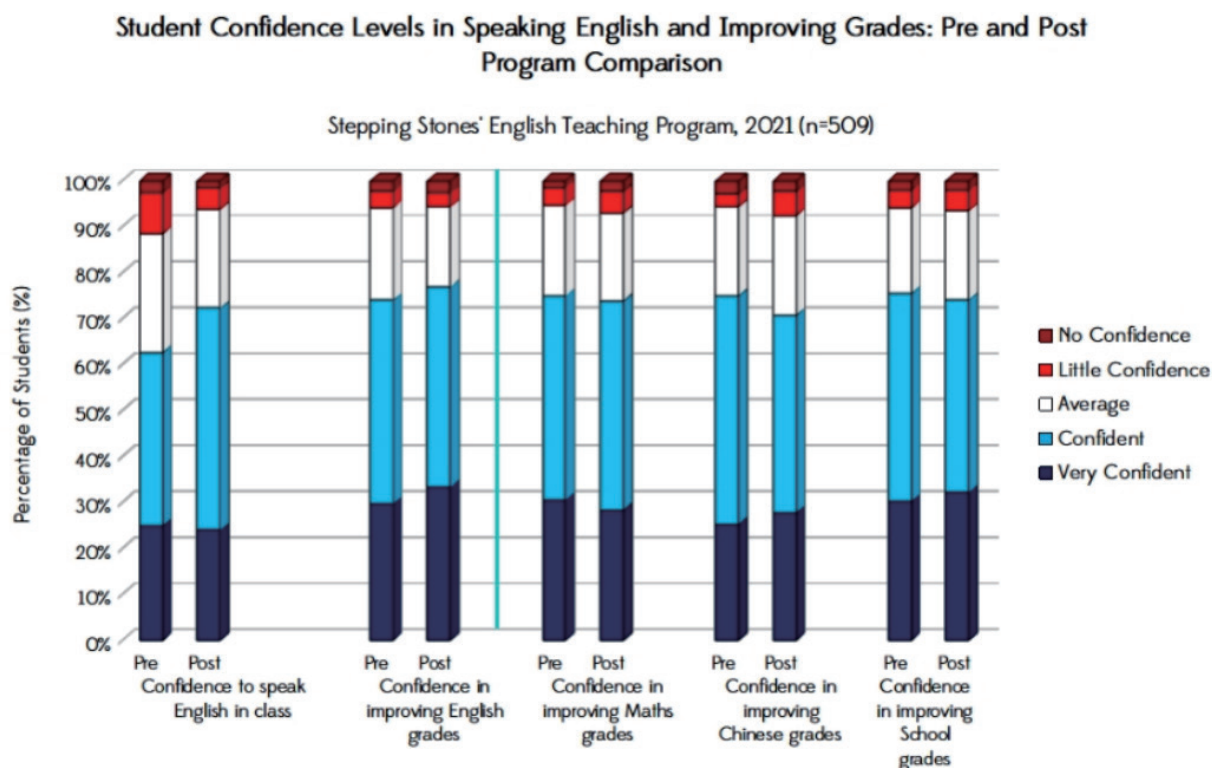
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Increasing Students' Confidence in English

Another one of our key objectives is to improve students' confidence in English and to better prepare students for their key English examinations. To assess whether these objectives were met, the baseline and follow-up surveys included questions that asked students their confidence levels in speaking English in class, and their confidence levels in improving their English, Chinese, Maths, and general school grades. Students were asked to rank their responses from 'not confident' to 'very confident'.

As can be seen from the figure below, the percentage increase of students feeling confident to speak English in class rose from 62.67% to 72.3% (a massive 15.36% increase). This significant percentage increase suggests that our interventions succeeded in making students more prepared and confident to engage in English-speaking situations. They are subsequently more inclined to exert effort in learning English, which can arguably be translated into a greater English proficiency.

The data also highlights the difference between students' confidence to improve their English, Chinese and Maths grades. English had the highest percentage increase of 3.86% (from 73.98% to 76.83%), which yet again highlights the impact that our English programs have on improving students' prospects. However, there was a percentage decrease for Maths (-1.33%), Chinese (-5.8%) and school grades in general (-1.84%). This can be interpreted to suggest that when further support is provided for students, this results in improved confidence in their skills and abilities to achieve success in school. Good grades in English are critical for students in China, as this will help open doors for their futures, such as through access to higher education.



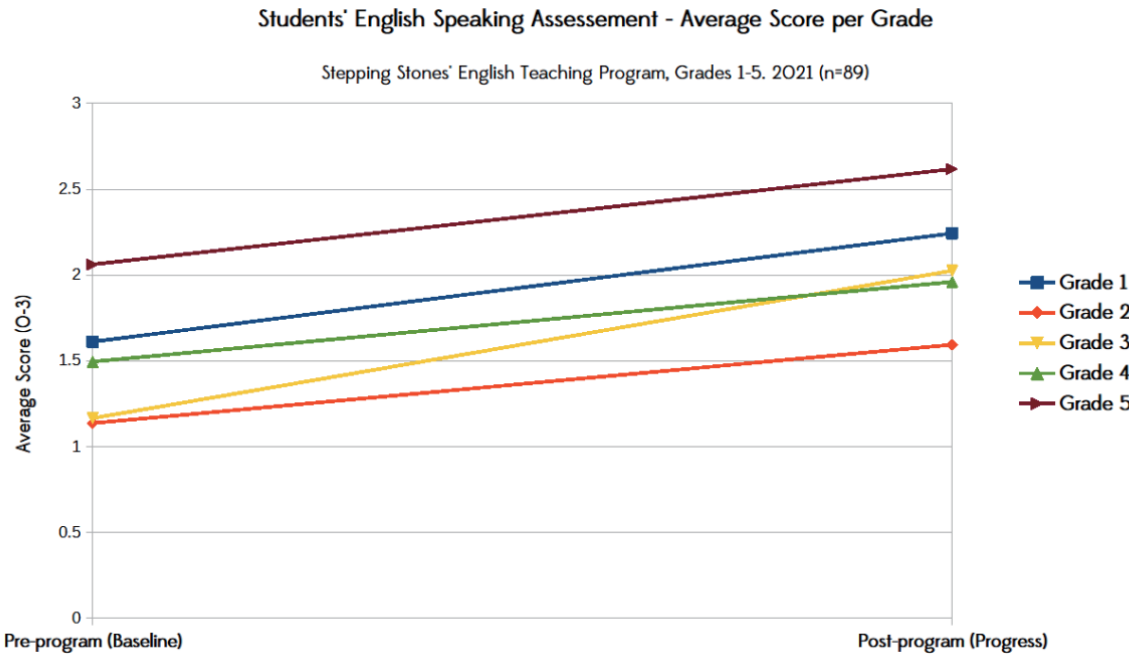
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Acquiring English Speaking Skills

For the third year running, we have conducted pre- and post-speaking assessments to evaluate students' progress in English over the course of our programs. The assessment consisted of seven to eight short questions, asked both before and after the completion of our program. The questions were based directly on our curriculum. The assessments were conducted orally by our Stepping Stones' trainers at six sites in Shanghai. 89 students, ranging from Grade 1-5, took part in the tests, and they were scored for each question on a scale from 0 to 3, where 3 represents complete oral proficiency.

The figure below shows that in each grade, the student's average score rose between the baseline and follow-up speaking assessments. The most significant increase was achieved by Grade 3 students. Their average score increased from 1.17 to 2.03. As was the case in 2019 and 2020, the assessment suggests that our students acquired knowledge through our English Teaching programs, thus making progress in English.

The evaluation of our English Teaching Program shows promising results that demonstrate the effectiveness and success of our interventions, namely in relation to students acquiring new language skills, finding English easier, and enhancing their confidence in English. This increased motivation in English after our interventions can cause students to want to work harder, thus resulting in actual improvements in their test scores and prospects.

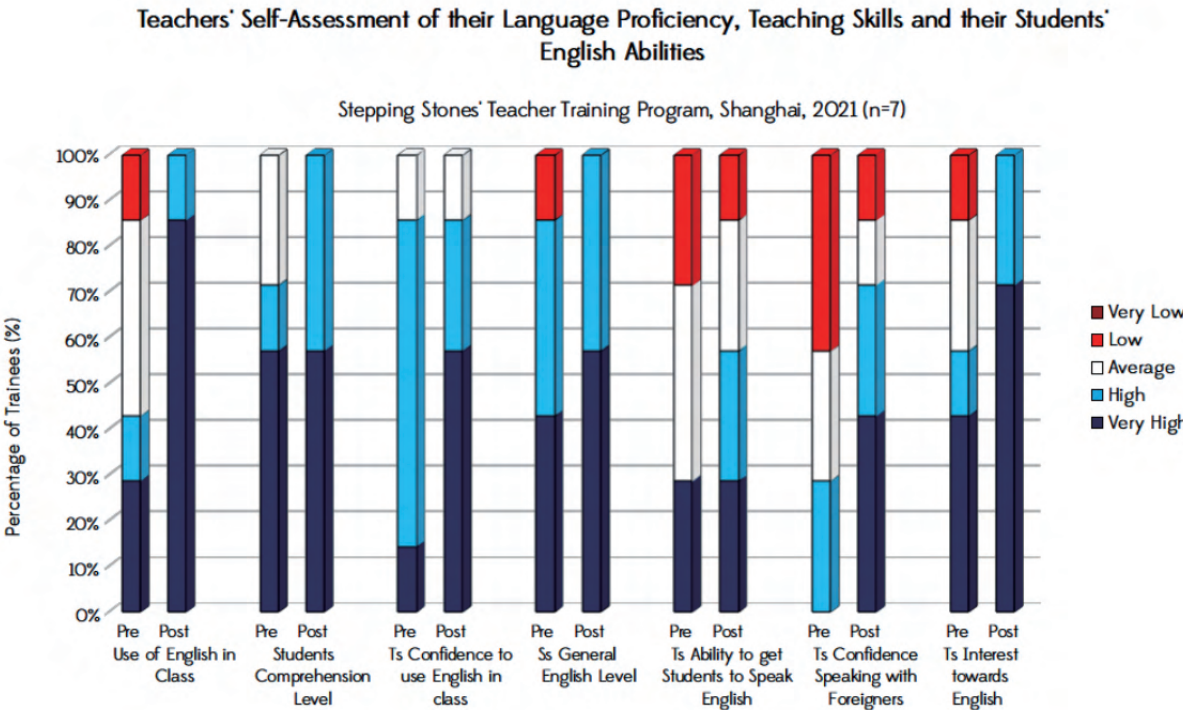


Teacher Training

Our Teacher Training Program aims to improve the quality of English education at migrant schools and schools located in remote areas of China, by providing professional training and follow-up support to their teachers. In 2021, seven teachers benefitted from this program at Taoyuan Migrant School in Shanghai. The training focused on the use of technology in class, error correction, use of English in the classroom, English related learning activities and games, English communication techniques, lesson planning, and finding English teaching resources.

The trainees were asked a variety of baseline and follow-up questions to assess their confidence and ability to teach English. They were asked to rank their responses from ‘very low’ to ‘very high’ (see Figure below). The results indicate that after our intervention, more teachers (Ts) are using English in the classroom ‘often’ or ‘very often’ (133.33% increase) and feel able to encourage their students (Ss) to speak English (100% increase). These increases highlight one of the many important goals of our Teacher Training Program, which is to help teachers provide an enriched English learning environment for their students and to create more opportunities for students to learn, practice and improve their English.

It is also important to discuss how the teachers viewed their students’ English levels and English ability. The data shows that the number of teachers who rated their students’ comprehension and general English level as ‘high’ or ‘very high’ increased by 40% (from 71.43% to 100%) and 16.67% (from 85.71% to 100%) respectively. Here, the data can be interpreted to suggest that while the program focuses on teachers, students indirectly benefit from this intervention too. The skills and tools that trainees acquired during training seem to have a knock-on positive impact on their students, as their improved confidence in their teaching skills means that they are better able to support their students with their English learning. This better support leads to improvements in their students’ English attainment. Such results are promising, and we hope to be able to support more teachers and students alike through our Teacher Training Program in the future.



Digital Literacy

The key objectives of our Digital Literacy program are to improve students' digital literacy and life skills and to increase their self-esteem, critical thinking, and confidence in accessing appropriate further education and better work opportunities. To assess the value and impact of our program on students' confidence and attitude towards computers, technology and employment prospects in adulthood, evaluations were conducted at our program sites in 2021, distributing pre- and post-program survey questionnaires to a total of 108 beneficiaries.

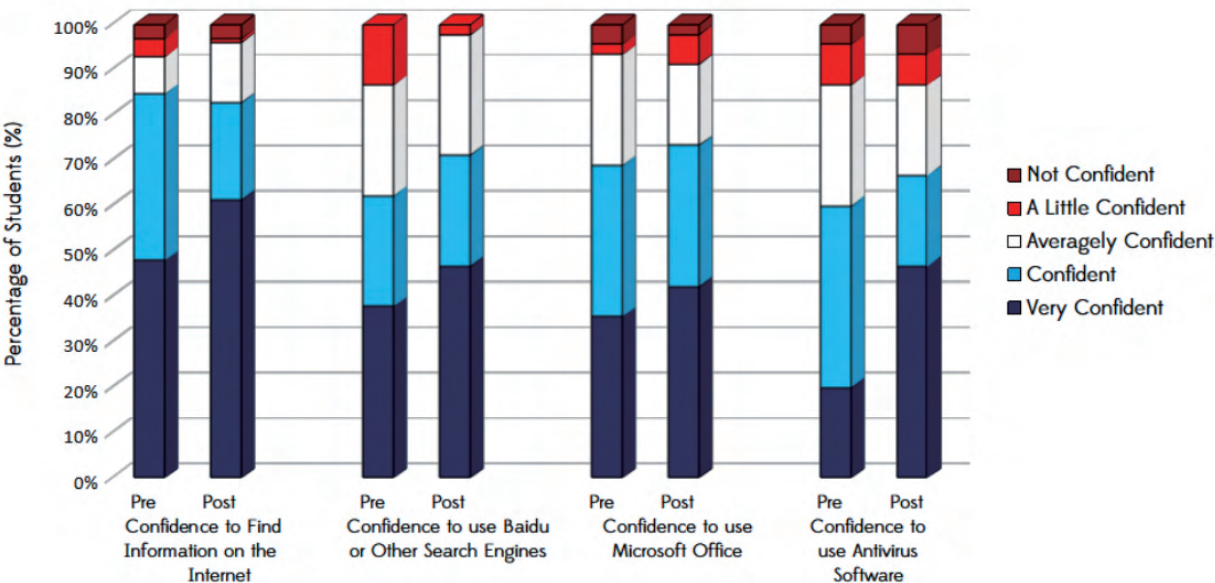
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Developing Students' Confidence and Proficiency in Computers

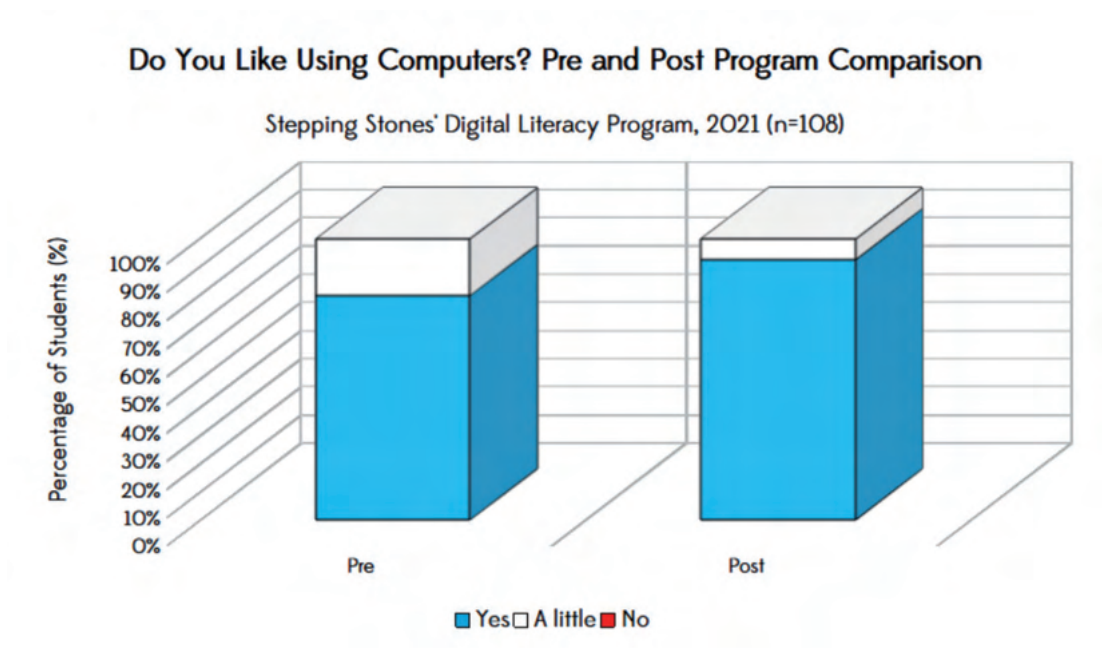
One of the ways that we strive to help students become more proficient and confident in computers is through project-based activities using Microsoft Office and Internet search engines. To assess the impact of these project-based activities, students were asked four questions about their confidence levels in their computer skills and were asked to rank their responses from 'not confident' to 'very confident'. The Figure below compares the baseline and follow-up results of these questions. Consistent with findings from previous years, the results indicate a significant rise in the number of students feeling 'very confident' to find information on the internet (27.66% increase), using Baidu or other search engines (23.53% increase), using antivirus software (133.33% increase), and using Microsoft Office (18.75% increase).

Students' Confidence To Use Computers: Pre and Post Program Comparison

Stepping Stones' Digital Literacy Program, 2021 (n=98)



Students were also asked if they like using computers (see Figure below). The data shows a significant increase between the baseline and the follow-up surveys regarding this question. Across all sites, the percentage of students who liked using computers rose by 16.28% (from 79.63% to 92.6%). This increase, together with the significant improvements in students' confidence to use computers, is in line with one of the project's main objectives, which is for students to become more comfortable with using computers to gather information, solve problems, and communicate knowledge.

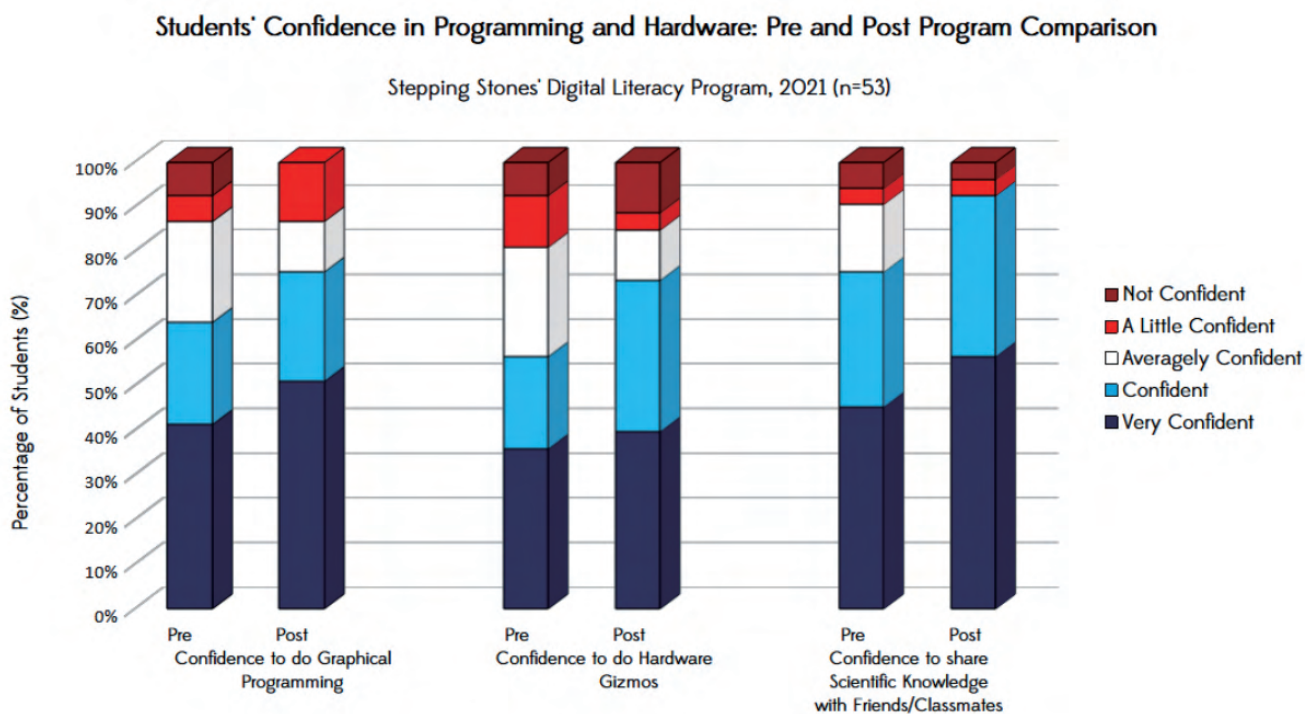


2

Developing Students' Confidence in Programming and Hardware

In 2020 and 2021, we introduced new programming and hardware classes in the Digital Literacy curriculum, which included programs such as ScratchJR, Matatalab, HandPy and Micro:bit. These classes are intended for students with no experience in hardware and programming, to further explore fundamental concepts and tools of new technologies and unlock new possibilities for their future. To assess the impact of the new classes, a variety of questions were added to our pre- and post-surveys, which focused on students' confidence in these new concepts and tools. Again, students were asked to rank their responses from 'not confident' to 'very confident'.

As the figure below highlights, the results indicate that by the end of the program, there was a positive increase in students' confidence to do graphical programming (17.65% increase), hardware gizmos (30% increase) and share the scientific knowledge they learnt with their friends or classmates (22.5% increase). This data is encouraging as it shows that more students have more confidence in IT systems and knowledge after our interventions. Students can use this knowledge that they have gained through our classes to further explore prospects which involve programming and the use of hardware.



Enhancing Students' Knowledge and Confidence in Job Searching

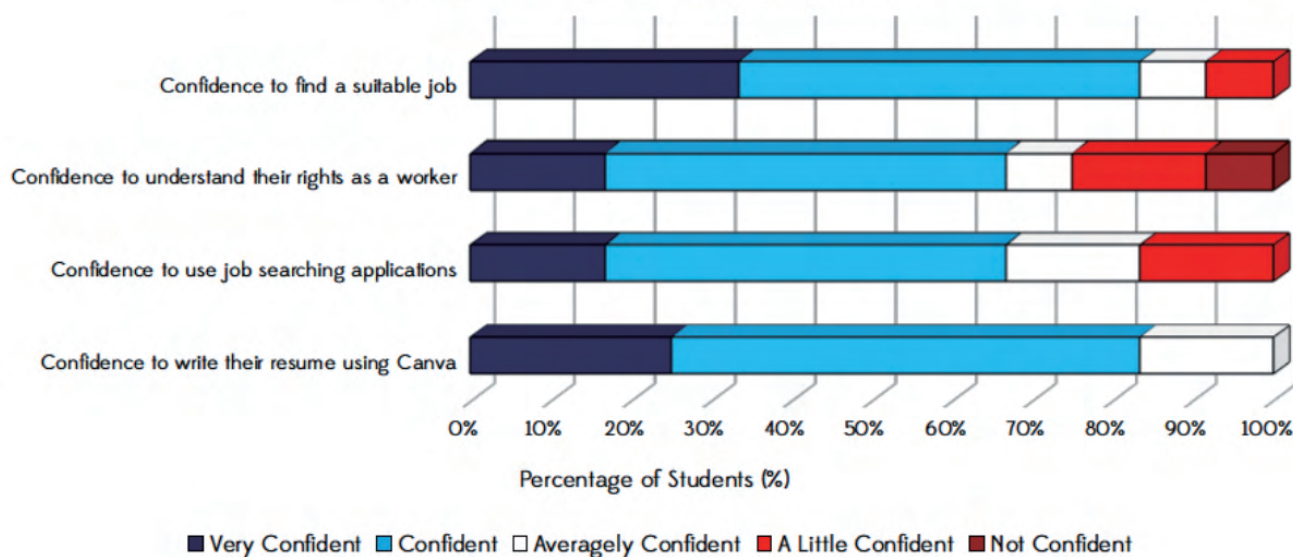
Launched in 2020 to improve vulnerable youths' access to appropriate further education and better work opportunities in the future with the support of a grant from Irish Aid, our Career Readiness Training shows encouraging results. Survey questionnaires again were used to assess the impact of the training, with students ranking their responses from 'not confident' to 'very confident'.

By the end of the 2021 program, most students reported feeling at least 'averagely' confident in some of the most important aspects of

job searching (see Figure below). A significant proportion of students reported feeling confident to write their resumes using Canva (100%), use job searching applications such as 51job and BOSS Zhipin (83.33%), and ultimately find a suitable job (91.67%). The figure also shows that a majority of our students felt confident to understand their rights as a worker by the end of the program (75%). Despite it being a relatively new program, our Career Readiness training shows positive results which are in line with our objective of reducing student vulnerability to exploitation in adulthood.

Students' Confidence in Job Searching and To Understand Labour Rights

Stepping Stones' Digital Literacy Program, 2021 (n=12)



We are encouraged by the results of our 2021 Impact Evaluation. In many ways, they are consistent with the results from previous years, which suggest that our interventions continued to have a positive impact on our beneficiaries' motivation, confidence, and skills, and contributed to our mission of improving education for disadvantaged communities in China.



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