

IMPACT EVALUATION

Classroom Teaching Program
XXGY School, Jiashan, 2015

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Background

In 2015, thanks to sponsorship from Optus, Stepping Stones launched a weekly classroom teaching program at XXGY school (Jiashan, Zhejiang) for Grades 1-9 students. The program consisted of 7-10 volunteers providing free English lessons to around 639 migrant children weekly.

In total, Stepping Stones' volunteers taught 15-16 lessons per week, amounting to a total of 327 lessons throughout the year 2015 (Spring and Fall semesters).



Methods

- (1) Comparative analyses of pre/post questionnaire responses
- (2) English test scores analysis
- (3) Students and volunteers feedback



(1) Comparative Analyses of Pre/Post Questionnaire Responses

To be able to assess the impact of the program on the interest and confidence of students in English, students from grades 3-8 were given 'pre-program' (or baseline) and 'post-program' (or follow-up) survey questionnaires.

The responses of the students to the same questions, before and after participation in the weekly program, were compared to generate the findings. Only the responses from students present at both surveys were considered valid. As such, the total number of valid respondents is 258 students (grades 3-8).

(2) English Test Scores Analysis

In order to measure the impact of the program on students' ability to pass English exams (*i.e.*, a grade of 60 percent or higher), Stepping Stones has tracked their English test scores across the 2014-2015 academic year.

The data that have been used for this analysis consist of the school's grades 3-8 students' results in the English final exam for each semester of the 2014-2015 academic year (*i.e.*, Fall 2014 and Spring 2015 semesters).

(3) Students and Volunteers Feedback

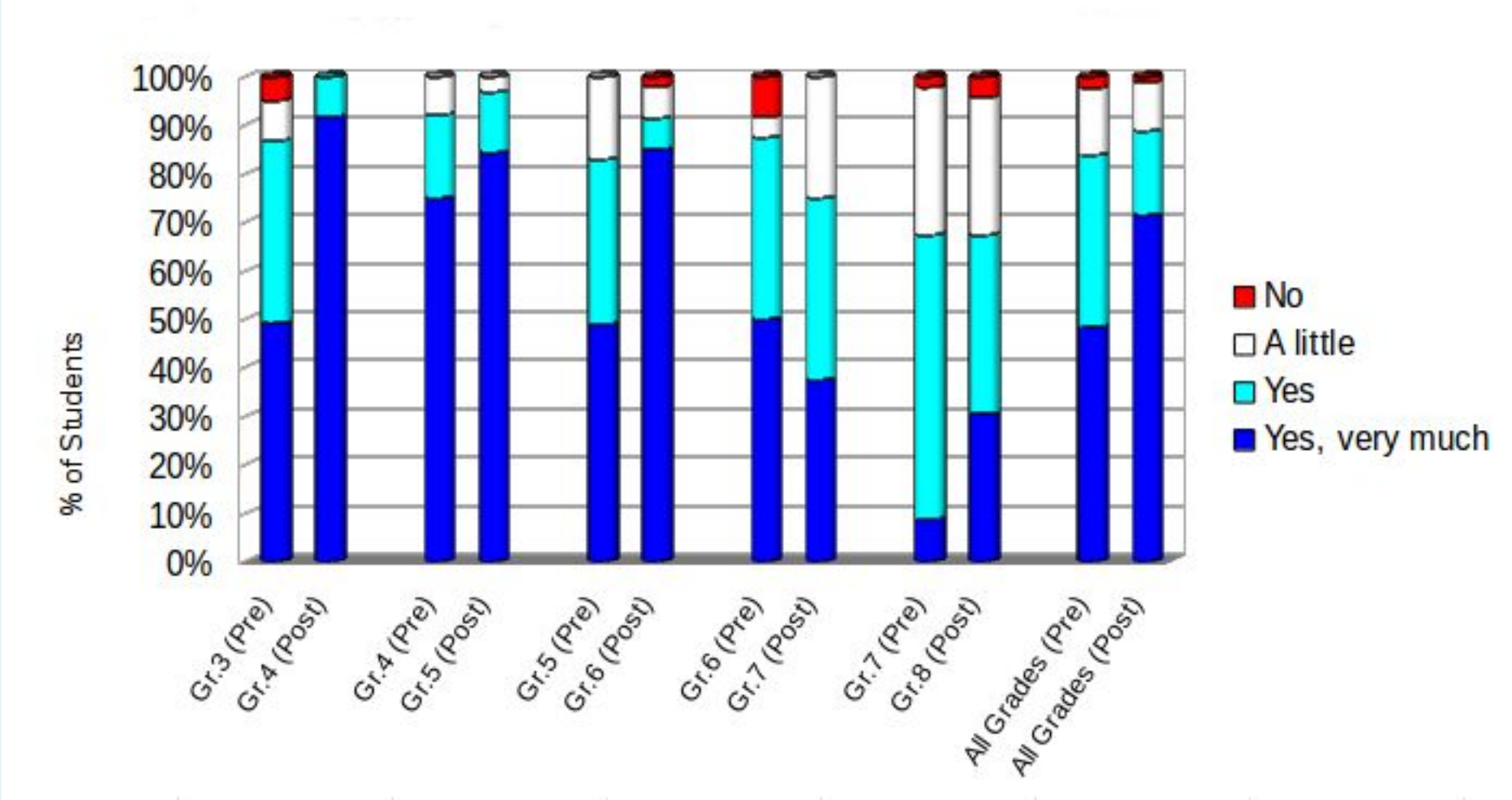
Interviews with students and volunteers were also conducted with the purpose of obtaining personal feedback and insight from them regarding their experience in the program. Interviews, which lasted 25 minutes to 1 hour, were conducted at the end of both semesters.



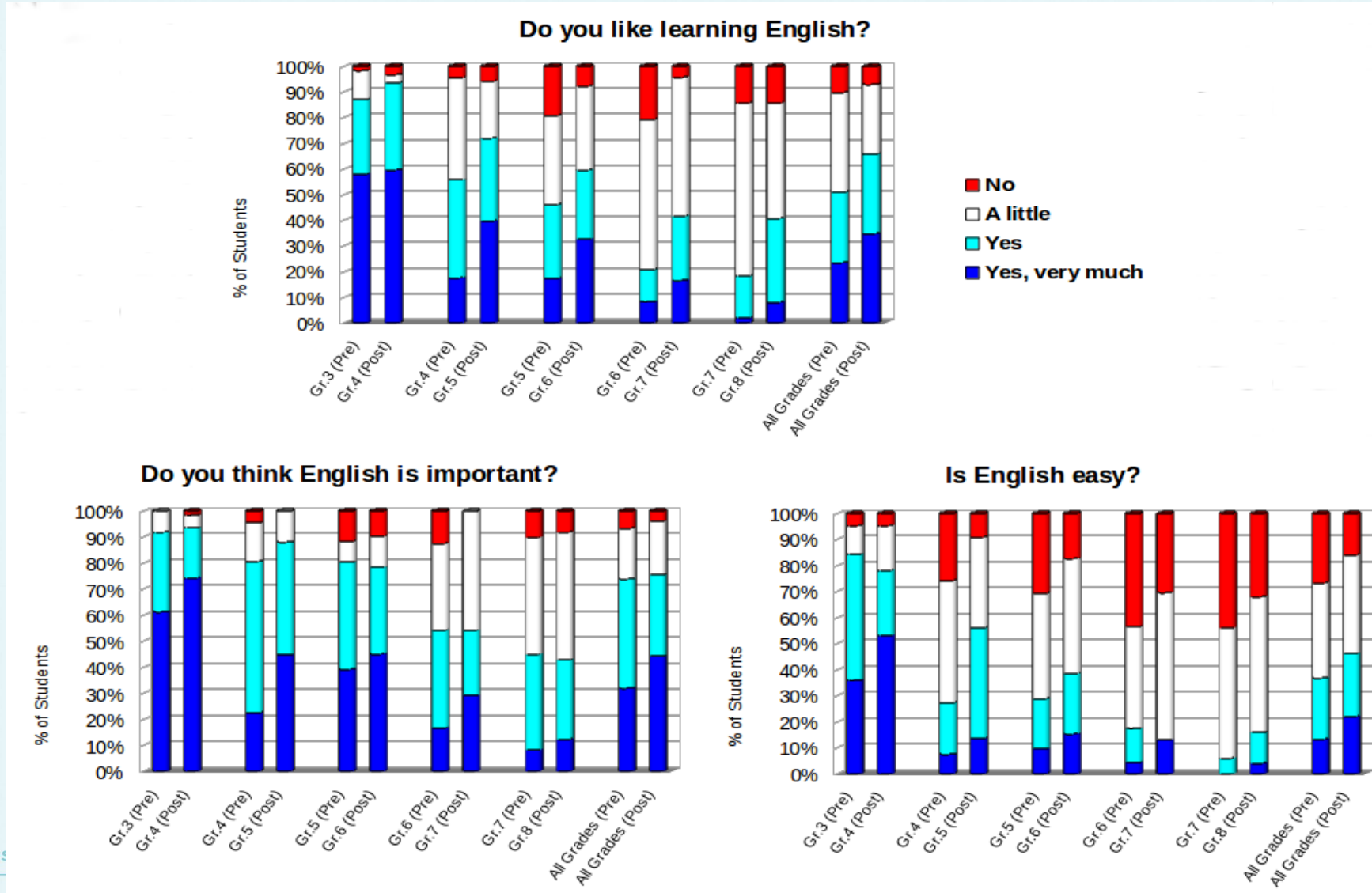
Results

Students' Interest and Confidence
in English

Do you like having a foreign teacher for your English classes? (Spring vs. Fall 2015)

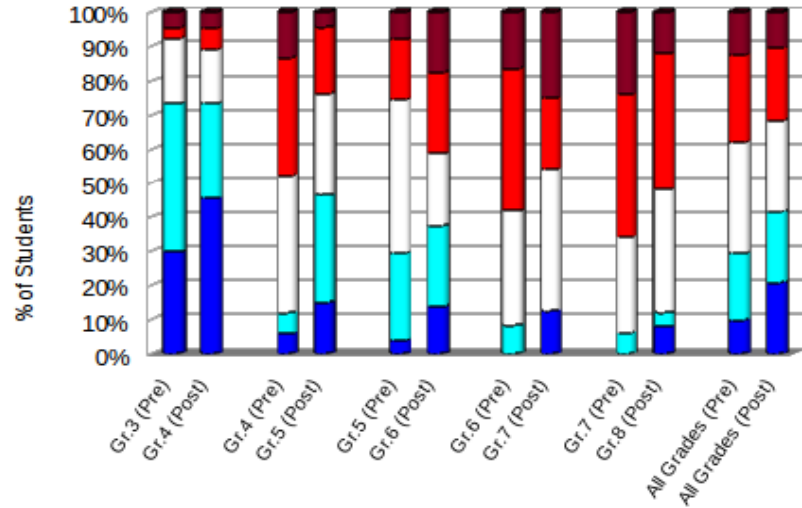


Students' attitude towards English (Spring vs. Fall 2015)

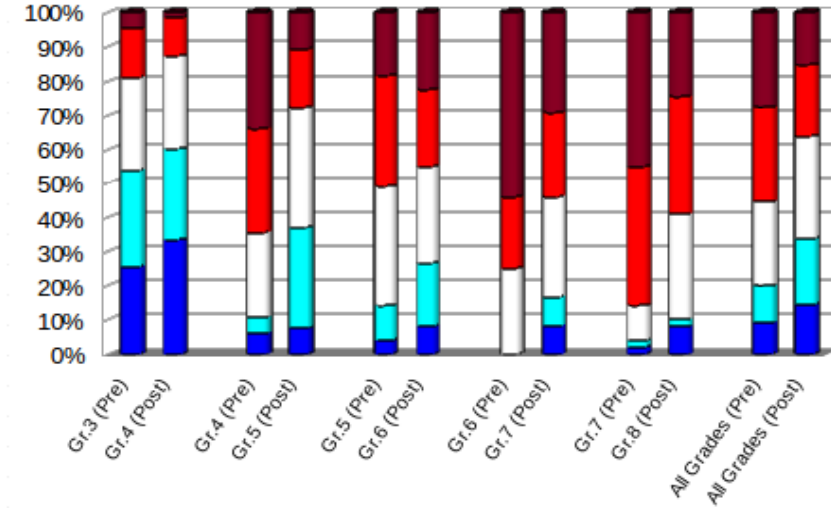


Students' confidence in English (Spring vs. Fall 2015)

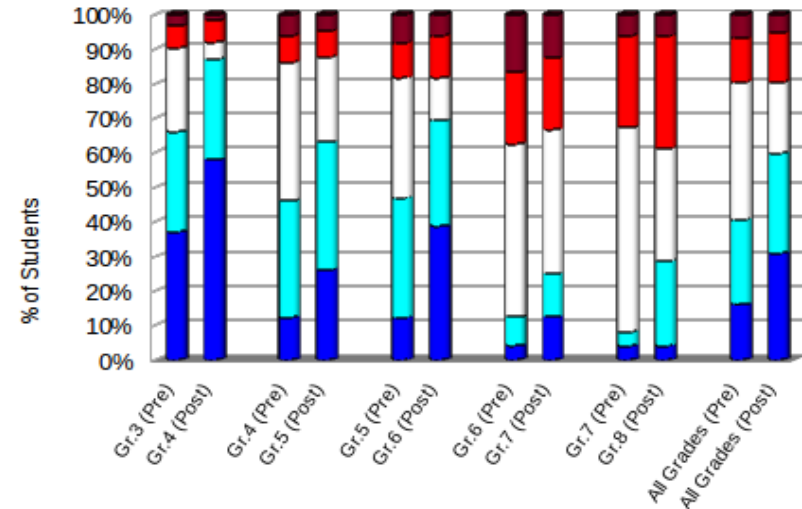
Confidence to talk in English during English class



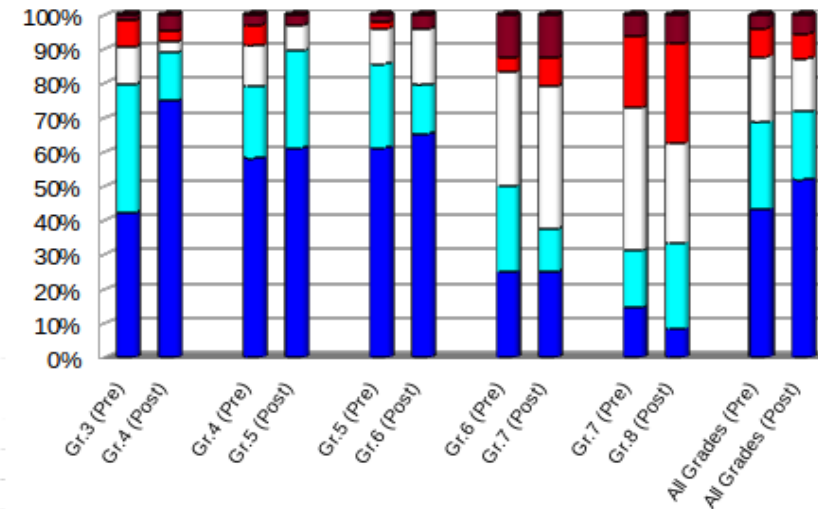
Confidence to talk to a foreigner in English



Confidence to improve English grades this semester



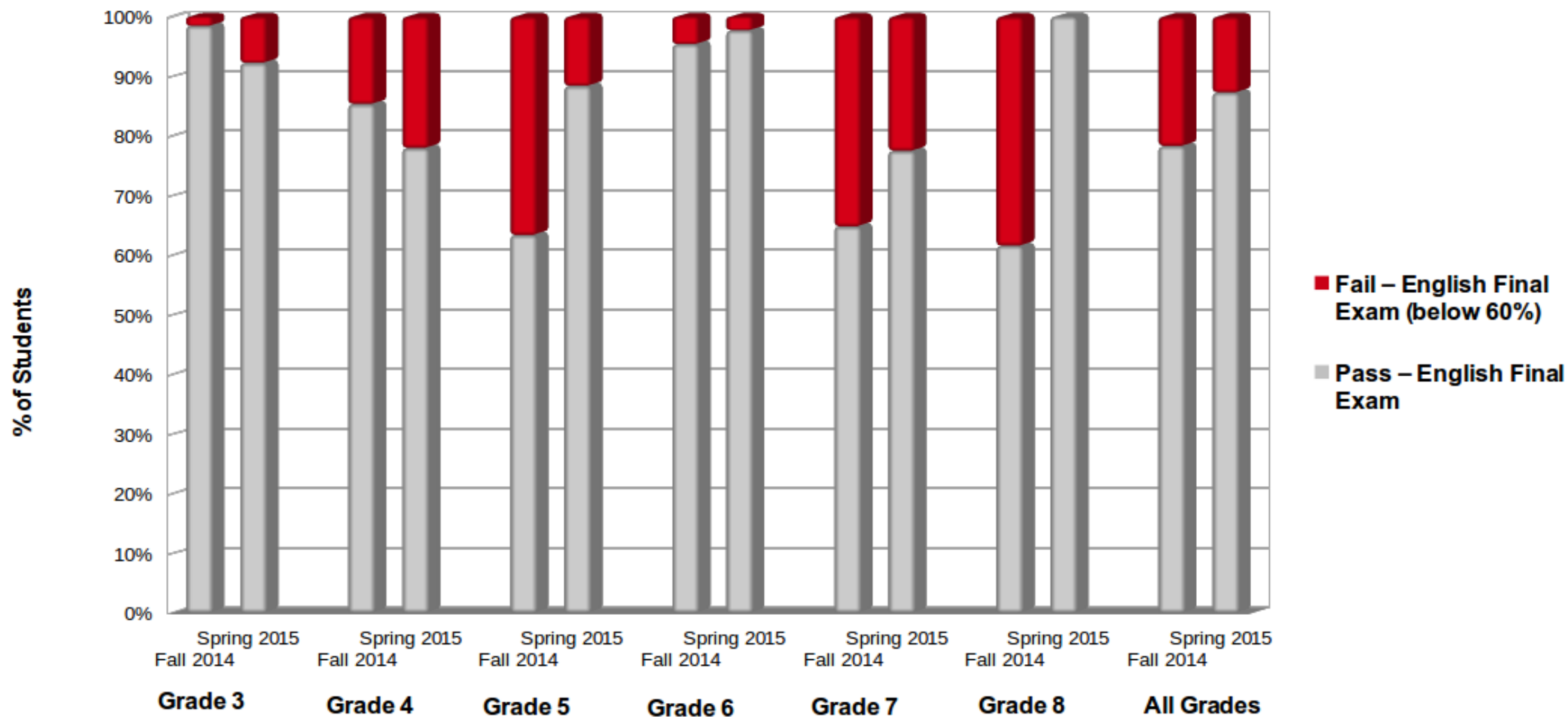
Confidence to complete English homework correctly



Results

Students' English Test Scores

Students' English exam success rate (Grades 3-8)



Results

Students and Volunteers Feedback

Volunteers' Feedback

“Volunteering as a teacher in a suburban Chinese school was definitely an eye opening experience. For someone who has had no experience teaching and very little experience speaking Chinese, the program was a challenge. However, I learned a lot from it. Sometimes the language barriers and the misbehavior of the children was frustrating, but when my students were able to finally understand a concept I was trying to teach, it felt like a great accomplishment. The sense of fulfillment that came with communicating with my students made a lot of the challenges I had to go through worth it. Despite a few instances of misbehavior, the students at this school made us feel very welcome, and were always excited to see us walk in their classroom in the morning. I may not have gotten to know every student's name, but I now recognize their faces and got to know a bit more about them every week. The English level of the students at this school was very low, but I think we made at least a small difference in terms of sparking their interest in English and improving their overall English level. My experience teaching here has been a valuable one” (Mika, December 2015).

“Because my major is social work, I always knew about migrant children from books before I became a volunteer in Stepping Stones. So lucky to have an amazing experience at XXGY School. Although sometimes I feel tired and sleepy on the way to Jiashan, I know it is worth it when the children can read out new words and smile happily” (Echo, December 2015).

“At first, many of the students were shy and had great difficulty answering basic questions in English. However, the students were eager to learn and quickly absorbed the lessons. It was so encouraging to see them grow more and more confident in their English language skills as each week went by. I had the joy of seeing the students' faces light up whenever they learned something new. I loved getting to be a part of such an exciting project. Although this was at times a challenging population to work with, the student's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning was contagious and made me excited to be teaching them. I was humbled by the hospitality the staff and students showed all the volunteers and how readily they embraced us as a part of their community. I learned a lot from my time at Jiashan and I'll carry these experiences with me wherever I go” (Valeria, June 2015).

Volunteers' Feedback

“Seven weeks ago, I started my journey as a 4th & 5th grade teacher at the XXGY School, located approximately an hour outside of Shanghai. Every Friday at 5:00 am, I rolled out of bed to prepare for the lengthy commute to the school. However, the lack of sleep and the scorching heat disappears from my mind as I see all the Chinese school age children running around and playing minutes before class starts. At 9:00 am, the bell rings and the children file into the classroom, waving and saying “Hello!” as they make their way to their seats. With no teaching experience and Intermediate Level Chinese knowledge, I begin to wonder, am I the right person for this job? Mika and I go through the class rules and then, after explaining the sample dialogue for the next activity, we pull out a big, plushy dice for the dice game. Children begin to bounce out of their seats with their arms raised high in the air saying “Teacher! Teacher!”. In this very moment, I realized these children were little bundles of energy, ready to explore the world and learn as much English as possible. My experience at XXGY has been short, but plentiful. I will never forget the challenges I overcame, the knowledge I gained, and the children I impacted. I appreciate your contribution to changing the lives of Chinese children, and I am very glad we were able to affect the young minds and future of China” (Christine, December 2015).

“Teaching at XXGY was particularly challenging in my case, as I taught grade 7 and 8. At the beginning of the semester, the majority of my students were mentally checked out and did not show an interest in learning English. However, each week when I walked into the classroom to teach, the students saw me less as a foreign volunteer, and more as a teacher who genuinely cared for their learning and overall welfare. Coming in each week to teach English provided the children with a sense of consistency, and made the English language something exciting. By the end of the term, the students were eager to participate in class and felt proud of their accomplishments. Though their English speaking abilities leave room for improvement, I am confident in the progress they have made this semester. Teaching at XXGY has taught me about the important role a teacher holds in fostering students’ thirst for learning and the opportunities education can open up in the life of a child” (Kelsey, December 2015).

Students' Feedback

“The first time I had English class taught by foreign teachers, I couldn't understand what they were saying. Now I can understand a lot more! [...] I think foreign teachers are really good and funny, and my parents also think that it's nice to have them at the school. They are good teachers and because of them I am more interested in English now!” (Guiyu, Grade 3, June 2015).

“I think foreign teachers are pretty, humorous and vigorous. It's really nice of them to come from so far away to teach us English” (Tianyan, Grade 4, June 2015).

“Volunteer teachers turn study into a game and they are either elegant or handsome. They have a lot of interactions with us in class. [...] My parents are very happy with English classes taught by volunteer teachers” (Libo, Grade 3, June 2015).



Students' Feedback

“English is important for me; I would like to study abroad and communicate with foreigners. [...] English lessons taught by foreign teachers are more fun and we can win small prizes! I think it's really nice of them to spend their own spare time teaching us English” (Xujing, Grade 2, June 2015).

“I really like when the teacher comes. I feel very happy. Because they are foreigners.[...] I have not seen foreigners in China. The teacher taught us new words and sentences, I learned a lot. But sometimes I don't understand when they speak English a lot” (Xiaoxue, Grade 5, December 2015).

“We learned new words and accurate pronunciation. I want to communicate with the teacher in English, but sometimes I'm a bit afraid. I think the style of teaching is very special. We want to buy gifts for the teacher, but there is nothing in our school store. The whole class wants to buy a gift for the teacher, but we can't buy a nice gift, even a greeting card” (Haizi, Grade 6, December 2015).

“Teachers are very nice, and the atmosphere of class is very good. We will never feel embarrassed. Because we are from different countries, we are very happy to see foreign teachers. The teacher teaches us a lot of phrases, such as “how to spell”, and I still remember. I hope foreign teachers can come here more” (Yujing, Grade 6, December 2015).



Key Findings

Attitude towards English and Stepping Stones' program

- Results clearly show an increase in the number of students finding English 'very important' and 'very easy' at the end of the program.
 - The percentage of children finding it 'very important' and 'very easy' rose by 12 and 9 percentage points respectively.
- The percentage of children who said they 'very much like having a foreign (volunteer) teacher rose considerably in the follow-up (post) survey. The largest increase was reported in grade 3 (pre)/4 (post) where the number of children liking having a foreign teacher very much rose by 43 percentage points.
- 35% of students said they 'very much like learning English' in the post-survey, increased from 24%.

Key Findings

English Test Scores

- Analysis has established a positive relationship between our program and children's ability to pass English exams, especially among children in grades 5, 6, 7, and 8. Across all grades, 87% of students pass the English end of term exam in spring 2015, increased from 80% in fall 2014.
- The largest increase was reported in grade 8 where the number of children passing the end of term English exam rose by 38 percentage points to 100% in spring 2015.

Key Findings

Confidence in English

- Results clearly show that, across all surveyed areas of English proficiency, the percentage of children feeling 'very confident' rose considerably in the follow-up survey.
- The largest increase was reported in improving English grades where the number of children feeling 'confident' or 'very confident' in improving their English grades rose by 20 percentage points to over 59 % of the total.