



Best Practice: Closing the Achievement Gap Between Rural and Urban Schools

REPORT UPDATED: AUGUST 22, 2011

CITY: SHANGHAI

POLICY AREA: EDUCATION

BEST PRACTICE

The **Shanghai Rural Compulsory Education Management Program** aims to improve educational outcomes in rural areas of the city by partnering rural compulsory schools with high-quality urban schools and education agencies that provide management and support services.

ISSUE

Student performance in rural areas of Shanghai has lagged behind that of students in more urban schools. The number of students in rural areas is significant and continues to grow. In 2008, there were more than 1 million students studying in elementary and junior high schools in rural areas of Shanghai, consisting of 67% of all students in the city. When these students relocate to urban areas and seek to enter the workforce, they lack the necessary skills to be competitive.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The overarching goal of the program is to improve the content, development and educational quality in rural compulsory education schools during the process of urban-rural integration.

The specific goals of the program are:

- To improve inter-regional flow of human, financial and material resources.
- To effectively improve school management and efficiency of rural compulsory education by importing professional services from high quality urban schools and education agencies.
- To improve the content, development and educational quality in rural compulsory education schools and build a culture that exemplifies modern education.
- To transform government functions in Shanghai to foster the development of education agencies.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Shanghai Rural Compulsory Education Management Program is a two year project launched by the Shanghai Municipal Education Commission.

The first round of the program began with 20 schools in the 2007-2008 academic term and finished at the end of the 2008-2009 academic term. The second round started in 2009 with 40 schools and will run through the 2010-2011 academic term. The third round will start in the fall semester of 2011, and will finish in two years. The program is administered by the City of Shanghai and district governments, implemented by high-quality urban schools and education agencies, and evaluated independently by third party agencies.

The education executive department of the City of Shanghai establishes rules and regulations to implement the program, provides special funds, and creates the framework for the development of urban-rural school relationships.

The education departments of the rural districts enter into a contract with the urban schools and oversees program implementation.

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Through the contract, the urban school undertakes the following responsibilities for its rural partner:

- Formulating the rural school's education strategy
- Designing new school management systems
- Organizing and executing administrative duties in the area of education and teaching
- Introducing high-quality educational resources to improve the quality of rural school administrations

Through independent assessments of the project, educational evaluation agencies found great progress in participating rural schools in terms of educational methods, management of teachers, and efficiency.

COST

Each district government provides the necessary funds for the general operations of their schools. Additional funds are appropriated by the City of Shanghai to help run the program.

Cost of the First Round

The City of Shanghai appropriated a special fund totaling one million yuan (roughly \$150,000 USD) for each participating school for the two-year program. The fund was divided into two equal payments. The first payment was appropriated after initial evaluation and the second after mid-term evaluation.

Cost of the Second Round

The City of Shanghai appropriated a special fund totaling one million yuan (roughly \$150,000 USD) for each participating school for the two-year program. The fund was divided into two equal payments. The first payment was appropriated after initial evaluation and the second after mid-term evaluation.

The district governments of the grant parties decide whether to invest more in the program.

Cost of the Third Round

The City of Shanghai will appropriate 0.5 million yuan (roughly \$75,000 USD) for each participating school each year. The district governments of the rural grant parties may provide additional funds.

RESULTS AND EVALUATION

In order to ensure the effectiveness of the program, the third party evaluation agencies divide the assessment into four parts. The first is the initial assessment before the beginning of the program; the second is the assessment of the administrative plans formulated by the urban school; the third is the mid-term evaluation carried out one year after the implementation of the program; and the fourth assessment evaluates the effectiveness and results of rural compulsory education at the end of the second academic term.

According to the third party evaluation agencies, the first Shanghai Rural Compulsory Education Management Program achieved significant accomplishments—the 20 rural schools engaged in the program have undergone great changes. Significant improvements were seen in the area of school management, lecturing, faculty development and quality, student performance, and school culture.

Additionally, the municipal and district governments conducted a study to determine the influence of high-quality educational resources from urban to rural areas. The conclusions led to continued promotion of the Shanghai Rural Compulsory Education Management Program.

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The second round of the program was successful as well. The rural grant parties made great advancements in the areas of school management, faculty development, education quality and school culture. Therefore, the third round of this program will be launched in the fall semester of 2011.

TIMELINE

1st Round

March 2007 to July 2007	Policies and plans were made for the Shanghai Rural Compulsory Education Entrusted Management Program.
July 2007	The first round of contracts were signed by the Rural Grant Party and the Urban Support Side, and the program was officially initiated. The Urban Support side started preliminary research.
September 2007	Initial assessment of the program. With the start of the fall semester, the Urban Support Side entered the recipient schools. The first payment was appropriated.
October 2007	The Urban Support Side created school administration plans and initiated the entrusted management work.
November 2007	Evaluation of the preliminary administration plan was undertaken and adjustments were made by the Urban Support Side.
Nov 2007 to Aug 2008	The Urban Support side implemented improved administration plans and began entrusted management work.
September 2008	Mid-term evaluations. Urban Support Side adjusted the plans and management work. The second payment was appropriated.
Sept 2008 to June 2009	Implementation of school administration plans.
June 2009	Evaluation of the effectiveness and results of the program.

2nd Round

May 2009	Selection of the Urban Support Side and Rural Grant Party.
August 2009	The contracts of the second round were signed.
August-September 2009	Evaluation of the Preliminary Regulation Plan.
September 1, 2009	Creation of the Management Plan.
October 2009	Evaluation of the Plan.
November 2009	The first payment was appropriated.
September 2010	Mid-term evaluation. The second payment was appropriated.
June-July 2011	Evaluation of the effectiveness and results of the program.



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LEGISLATION

On March 27, 2007, the Shanghai Municipal Education Commission issued the Announcement of "Executive Plan for Promoting the Balanced Compulsory Education Development through Content Building." (Document Number: SHMEC<2007>No.10). This Announcement established the Shanghai Rural Compulsory Education Management Program.

LESSONS LEARNED

Although the program has brought fruitful results after a three year trial, some problems have arisen. First, rules and regulations designed to support educational agencies were insufficient. Second, the system of differentiated fund appropriation according to the effectiveness of the results needs to be further improved. Third, the method of appropriate evaluation of the content development in rural compulsory education should be enhanced. In sum, a more comprehensive design of the program, and a more scientific and detailed guide is needed to enhance the effectiveness of the program.

In the second round of this program, certain measures were taken to deal with the problems mentioned above.

- In order to improve the entry mechanism of the program and facilitate the communication of the two parties, a process was introduced to assess the qualification of urban schools and educational agencies.
- To improve the preliminary evaluation measures, Shanghai Education Evaluation Institute was entrusted to undertake the preliminary evaluation. The Urban partners created the Management Plan, which evaluates the education administration departments of different rural districts.
- Improvements were made to the supervision of the implementation, including the managing of funds by hosting seminars, and publishing bulletins and reports.
- Teachers were encouraged to participate in the program by adopting favorable policies.

TRANSFERABILITY

The Shanghai Rural Compulsory Education Management Program is transferable if relevant policies are available to provide sufficient high-quality educational resources and necessary funds.

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