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The Adaptive Program for Chinese Rural Children who  
Transfer to Urban Areas

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Creative Component Project

## Introduction

In China, the income discrepancy between rural and urban areas has resulted in the imbalance of educational resources. According to Hu et al. (2015), most rural-areas-origin parents make their living in urban areas via low-paid and difficult physical jobs, leaving their children in the hometown. It is only their aged grandparents who are responsible for taking care of children who have been left behind. Zhejiang, which boasts the second-highest GDP of all provinces in China, also has a shallow educational level in its countryside. Except for some advanced regions such as Shanghai and Guangzhou, there are more than 36% of people in Zhejiang province who do not even finish primary school (Li et al., 2016). Although the Chinese educational department sets nominal “equal standards” for the college entrance examination, it is harder for the children in rural areas to obtain a high score due to inadequate schooling. In contrast, children in urban areas can achieve higher ratings due to having access to high-quality education and abundant resources (Rong & Shi, 2010).

Even though the government has already set up projects that send volunteer teachers (who usually have received formal education in urban areas) to the schools in rural areas, the results are ineffectual and subtle. The maximum term for volunteer teachers is one year (some programs are even shorter, between three to six months), so these teachers do not offer rural children stable relationships. Besides, when different teachers have different pedagogical styles and provide various versions of narratives of the outside world, children may feel more confused rather than supported in their curiosity. To ensure positive development, it is paramount for children to establish stable and long-term relationships with mentors, who are usually adults or older teenagers (Witt, & Caldwell, 2005). The volunteer programs do not provide children with sufficient opportunities to develop positive internal assets via consistent, stable, long-term mentorship. These children understand the outside world only from the information relayed by instructors. However, most volunteer teachers are

young and usually do not have many educational experiences, so their assistance is limited and inefficient.

The huge rural-urban gap also suggests that children may feel unprepared and out of place when they come to urban areas for the first time (for example, they are part of programs that allow them to move to urban areas to improve their education). These children who migrate from rural areas to urban areas may quickly feel confused about their identity, and they are too young to establish the value system which can effectively understand such “cultural shock.” The article from Zhang et al. (2015) illustrates a few examples, wherein all the children who migrated to urban areas for the first time, felt confused about their self-identity, regardless of their economic background. Besides, due to the development of technology, children can easily access various information; however, they do not have enough capacity to evaluate the effectiveness of online “facts.” These children are more vulnerable than local urban children for various reasons: lack of sense of belongingness and feelings of safety; confusion about self-identity; and fear of strange new environment, etc. (Zhang et al., 2015). When children feel confused, they may search online to “seek help,”; but often, much information online is misleading or business-related, and they may be tempted by these overwhelming messages.

To reduce the urban-rural educational gap and to help rural children adapt to live in an urban area, the director of the non-profit organization GeneralLove Educational Center, and I will plan a way to assist student candidates to better adapt to the life in the city during their first year.

## **Literature Review**

### **Positive Youth Development**

Children must obtain positive youth development, which could help them to develop matured identity and sufficient capacity to recognize the world effectively. In general,

positive youth development means children can obtain specific characteristics, which can lead them to achieve a matured ideology and healthy personality to successfully transfer to adulthood (Witt & Caldwell, 2005). Many factors will influence people's development, which includes outside pressure and ideology from education. In general, humans receive training all the time as they experience a different lifestyle; however, the education they receive during early periods will form the fundamental blocks of their further development after they reach adulthood. Their ability to utilize critical thinking and the benchmarks to make decisions also derive from their precedent experiences. Although the people who enter adulthood may lack sufficient social skills, their ideology, norm system, and value set will directly determine what kind of people they will become. Each person has unique, developing experiences and personality, and we call the education they receive after adulthood as "subsequent development" (Witt & Caldwell, 2005). Human development is a complex process, and each person has unique personal experiences. To enhance the level of positive growth for people, youth workers can identify factors that will influence human development and intervene in the harmful elements in early-stage development such as childhood, adolescence, and emerging adulthood.

There are many crucial positive youth development components, and one of the paramount concepts of positive youth development is the 5 C's, which are highlighted by Witt and Caldwell (2005): competence, character, connection, confidence, and caring. The 5 C's framework illustrates the important characteristics to achieve a healthy and prosperous developmental process. The 5 C's concept does not highlight how to "fix" the problems of children, but to summarize necessary internal assets which will facilitate children's positive development. The people who successfully develop 5 C's during adolescence tend to have more positive attitudes toward society and life (Witt & Caldwell, 2005). Even though some children who live in an adverse environment, for example, parent divorce, family violence,

school bully, and disability, may develop resistance subconsciously, they still need positive supports from the outside environment, such as from close friends, schoolteachers, and social organizations. Most of the rural Chinese children live in a negative atmosphere that lacks educational resources and social engagement. The intervention program designed for this project aims to offer the students who live in Chinese rural areas 3 C's supports via changing their living environment and providing better educational resources, which will enhance their internal assets, ideally to raise resiliency in the long-term. We will primarily implement 3 of the 5 C's, which are confidence, connection, and competence. Children will establish confidence after making achievements and obtaining supports from others. Children who are equipped with confidence tend to appear more positive social engagements after adulthood, and they usually have greater-level resiliency in a negative environment (Witt & Caldwell, 2005). The confidence will bring children a sense of self-worth, and they will have the belief they can self-succeed. The connection feature in 5 C's means that children have a stable relationship with other people as well as social activities. The children who gain a connection during their childhood tend to have positive bonds with society (Moore, 2017). When children obtain sufficient competence, they can act effectively in schools as well as in society. We will primarily implement these 3 C's since developing confidence, competence, and connections require outside supports from schools, community, and peers.

The 5 C's is a US-based theory based primarily on research of children located in the USA; however, according to the research from Zhou (2002), the 5 C's principle of youth development is applicable for all young people. Nevertheless, it is not very easy for schools and educational institutions to enforce the 5 C's education under Chinese culture. Developing 5 C's is a long-term process, and schools have to research to design effective programs which are compatible with its existing educational system. Nevertheless, the Chinese educational system focuses on the test results of the standardized examination, and the high-pressure

study occupies almost all the spare time of students. In Chinese high schools, students need to study at least eight lessons simultaneously, and they do not have much time to learn knowledge except academic coursework. Besides, the positive effects of developing 5 C's are invisible and unconscious, and different people will receive different results. In this way, according to the investigations from Bush and Haiyan (2013), since the Chinese educational system focuses on developing students' "hardware" (include tough academic coursework and skills of music, art, etc.) rather than "software" (such as personal traits, leadership style, and norms system), Chinese schools rarely develop leadership and internal assets.

There are more and more Chinese educational institutions that have adopted 5 C's guidelines, and most of them are private schools that have purchased advanced software and have expensive tuition. These schools usually have great educational resources and experienced teachers to assist students in handling the tough coursework effectively. In China, only the institutions which have achieved excellent academic results have additional capacity to develop positive internal assets (Hu et al., 2015), and these institutions only exist in the most-advanced Chinese metropolis such as Beijing and Shanghai. Even in Chinese urban areas, most schools and educational organizations offer lessons to enhance the grades of academic coursework. The situation in Chinese rural areas is worse. It is common if a 13-year-old girl drops out and marries due to poverty, or a nine-year-old boy enters first grade in primary school. These children do not have sufficient capacity for coping with their life issues. The components of 5C's are not isolated but interrelated with each other. According to the article by Rong and Shi (2010), a lot of rural children are responsible for taking care of little siblings, and they can build friendships with local children. In this way, applying 5 C's to the intervention program will become a valuable assumption to explore Chinese positive youth development theory, which adapts to Chinese culture.

### **Current Rural Education**

In this way, applying the 3 C's to the intervention program created for this project will be new and novel since positive youth development is rarely used in Chinese culture. It will need to be adapted, especially given the current state of rural education. Background about rural education and transfer to urban areas will be discussed in turn.

There are several reasons why we conduct intervention programs targeted at children in Chinese rural areas. First of all, the income discrepancy in China has resulted in severe consequences in uneven resource allocation, ranged from living standards to educational resources. This is especially true in rural areas, as Wang and Xie (2006) indicate that different rural Chinese provinces have unbalanced educational resources. Yang (2010) highlights that students in rural areas have higher barriers to accessing higher education. The draconian living environment and meager teaching resources make children more likely to yearn for escaping from their hometown. Besides, education cannot provide children and their parents with real-time, deliverable, and positive feedback as they input money and time since education is a long-term investment with an uncertain monetary return. Many students exit school and make a living as early as 13 years old. Even though they indeed leave rural areas, they are only able to do the low-skill physical jobs due to a lack of professional skills and educational background. In other words, even though they have already stood on the land of the metropolis, their cognitive levels are not advanced enough to successfully live in the city.

Additionally, the quality of teachers, as well as the learning materials, is different between urban areas and rural areas. For example, the students in Beijing, the capital of China, can afford various after-school programs, participate in the world-level championships, not least that most of them do not worry about food, clothes, or survival. Besides, the high-paid salary and competitive educational market attract more high-quality teachers to carefully engage in education, improve their level of teaching, and communicate

with outstanding colleagues to offer better services. As the article from Rong and Shi (2010) reveals, the living conditions in Chinese rural areas is staggering. In Yunnan, one province in China, many students still need to walk at least four hours per day to access schools. The researchers observe and calculate the average studying hours of the children in rural areas and the one in urban areas. They found that the daily productive studying hours of urban students was nearly ten hours, and that of rural students was two to three hours. Also, the primary life routines of rural students are chatting, doing chores, and doing farm work, and these activities occupied most of their time and distracted them from the study. Besides, He et al. (2015) has revealed that the poor living condition in rural areas also cannot attract high-quality teachers. The quality of the teacher in rural areas is much lower than that in urban areas since a lot of teachers in rural areas only have the degree of high school. The worst fact, especially, is that high-quality, high school students would leave hometowns and seek jobs in urban areas. The limitation of the children's reachable outlook and teachers' qualification subsequently obstruct children's way to positive development. In this way, the scarcity of high-quality teachers has become a serious issue, which directly results in the extremely low educational quality in rural areas. In addition, learning weariness is prevalent in rural areas since most students do not have personal or academic goals and cannot obtain positive feedback from negative surrounding environment. Besides, there is scarce adult mentors which can be set up as their example of life. The children, who do not have matured value systems and social norms, cannot "follow" the positive model, and they are likely to become weak on both the physical and cognitive aspects.

### **Current Intervention Efforts**

Secondly, the Chinese government has set up many intervention programs and encouraged qualified teachers to join these programs; however, the effects are limited. Li et al. (2016) display a one-year-long intervention program of the government and some results

in Zhejiang province. The government recruited Chinese college students as the volunteer teachers with a monetary reward: the qualified candidates would obtain a one-year college tuition deduction, which is about 8000 RMB (1100 USD equivalent). However, most respondents were originally from rural areas. They only aimed to obtain financial aids, and their qualifications were still far away from the requirements of formal teachers in urban areas. The amount of this financial aid is subtle for most students in urban areas and they are unwilling to utilize one year to “earn” such monetary rewards. Also, most of the candidates did not have teaching experience, and, according to the interviews with students, the different pedagogical methods from various volunteer teachers made them feel more confused about the outside world, and they felt bored in the study. As a result, the program of sending the volunteer teachers to rural areas did not receive the positive feedback that was expected. Zhang et al. (2007) illustrate that the programs from the government do not solve the social problems within rural areas such as gender inequality and early marriage. The volunteer teachers also suffer the negative impacts of the stereotyping views regarding marriage, friendship, and gender inequality. Researchers interviewed more than 300 previous volunteer teacher candidates (90% of them were females), and 60% of them mentioned they experienced cultural shock, which brought negative impacts on them. Also, 18% of the female interviewees said that they met sexual harassment by local citizens. And only a bare majority of interviewees regarded volunteering as a pleasant and helpful experience.

The programs of sending volunteers to rural areas have become less and less attractive—continuing to leave behind rural areas in both economic and ideological aspects. The Chinese government has set up a few programs, which transfer outstanding rural students to urban areas to study, but most programs are related to political factors. Zhang et al. (2007) reveal that the Chinese local government has limited resources in education, so it regards solving stakeholder conflicts as the priority. Most similar programs are set up in Xinjiang and

Xizang: the provinces were once filled with terrorism and sought independence from China. The Chinese government wants to mingle their culture to that in the Chinese mainland through education. However, such process has not completed yet, so the government still primarily funnel its funds to the programs with federal benefits.

The cultural background and surrounding environment are different between Chinese rural areas and that in urban areas, and children may feel shocked and even confused if there was not an effective adaptive plan. Witt and Caldwell (2005) highlight the significance of offering children positive social assets during their development. Adolescence, which is one of the most significant developmental periods of human beings, requires special care and effective adult models to assist them in recognizing the world better. When the rural children came to the urban areas for the first time, they do not know anyone and eagerly require the instructions, which range from personal life to academic, from mentors. The positive social assets include but are not limited to the sense of belongingness and long-term stable relationships with the adult model. In this way, youth workers must take care of the mental health of student candidates after they move to urban areas. Zhang et al. (2015) reveals that immigrant children usually lack a sense of belongingness since the environment in urban areas is entirely different from that of their hometown. In addition, they cannot find anyone they can rely on, especially during adolescence, the very life period which is composing the central value system. Most schools and institutions will assist children to adapt to the new environment better; however, the actual requirements of care and resources are much smaller than children should have obtained. Students may feel confused about their identity and local environment, and active friendships with local students and mentors play a significant role for them to adapt to the culture. However, according to the research from Zhang et al. (2007), most transferred students can only obtain care from teachers, and the communications with their classmates, who are also transferred children, may lead them to become more confused.

In this way, as the research Zhang et al. (2007) conclude, the most potent cultural adaption method is to help these children participate in local events, make local friends, and establish long-term stable mentorships with regional adult peers. Overall, the precedent Chinese intervention programs are not very useful, which is the reason why a project like this one is required.

### **Methodology**

To complete this project, first a connection was made with Mary (pseudonym), who is the owner as well as the senior manager of General Love Educational Center, focused on improving the lives of rural children, via several informal discussions. Hence, I was able to access the primary resources of current Chinese rural-urban program information, the trends of treatments to rural children, and how other social organizations make dedications in improving rural children's living conditions. Mary also allowed me to conduct an informal observation of her organization to gain a better understanding of their purpose and how they fulfill their mission. The time duration of observation was about two days – eight hours a day, sixteen hours in total. The details and inspirations from the observation are regarded as the references to design adaptive activities, which will be discussed in the Results section.

Secondly, the online resource databases, such as Google Scholar, e-Library through Iowa State, and Chinese HowNet is how evidence-based information was gained. This information includes the life condition overviews of current Chinese rural children, previous similar programs from the Chinese government, and the compatibility between Western positive youth development theory and Chinese educational culture. Google Scholar was used to gather general information regarding rural Chinese children and their surrounding education; through the Iowa State University e-library, the journal articles from EBSCOHost databases were also conducted. In addition, HowNet is the primary resource to obtain complementary data from modern Chinese educational journals. Few educational researchers

focus on improving the living conditions of rural Chinese children. Still, this research primarily relies on Chinese journals to research how to assist children who live in a negative environment to achieve better development under the Chinese educational system.

## **Results**

### **Overall Description for Nine Activities**

In developing this project aimed at developing a program to support the transition of rural students to urban areas, nine activities were developed (Appendix A). All nine activities aim to facilitate three out of the 5 C's, which are connection, confidence, and competence. According to Witt and Caldwell (2005), children obtain these 3 C's mostly from outside interventions such as social engagements, stable and positive experiences during positive youth development programs. The whole program aims to assist rural children to better adapt urban life via different activities (Appendix A). The children who are experiencing a significant transition of life conditions may be more likely to suffer mental problems if they do not obtain sufficient supports from outside (Villarruel et al., 2007). The first stage of the program is guiding rural children to familiar with the surrounding environment, including the living conditions as well as learning tools in urban areas. They will explore the city and discover their new living environment in small groups (though aided by a youth worker), which will hopefully increase their sense of belonging to the new environment (Galavotti et al., 1997). The second stage is helping rural children establish close relationships with their new classmates and instructors. The stable relationship is the most critical component in implementing "connection" in 5 C's (Witt & Caldwell, 2005). In the third stage, rural children will participate in social activities to get familiar with the social rules in urban areas and establish confidence at the same time. As Witt and Caldwell (2005) illustrate, confidence means that children have sufficient self-esteem and trust themselves to face tasks and challenges. Enhancing confidence means youth can bravely believe themselves, which is one

of the most fundamental factors in developing leadership power. In addition, actively taking part in social activities is helpful to help rural children to implement competence, which is part of the 5 C's. Competence means the capacity for coping with complex tasks such as self-management, emotional control, and critical-thinking ability, etc. Participating in social activities with peers has been proven it has extraordinary effects in enhancing children's internal assets, according to Larson (2006). After the intervention program, the rural children should have basic practice for engaging in urban life, which may produce positive long-term effects on their development.

The whole program is composed of empowerment from youth workers, the supports from peers, and the guidelines from adult mentors. According to Vella et al. (2011), the mental supports for youth should cover the relationship with friends, adults, and coaches. The coach is to offer guidelines for youth's behaviors, and the friend is to provide mental supports, and the adult mentor is to give the children advice. In this program, even though we do not have a formal coach, the position of youth workers has similar functions and efforts with that of the coach: offer guidelines and advice on youth' behaviors. This all-around supportive system will ideally lessen rural children's mental upset and provide them with positive developmental components, which are connection, confidence, and competence.

### **First Activity**

The detailed instruction of "exploring the city", which is an example of one activity in the first stage, has been attached in Appendix B. This activity encourages rural children to walk outside and familiarize themselves with the urban environment by completing some specific tasks. The example tasks include but are not limited to comparing the prices of similar products (such as toothbrush, soaps, and cleaning gels) in different places. After exploration, they will give a presentation in front of all classmates and youth workers to show what they find. This activity will not only help rural children to know the city they are living

in but also establish their confidence by displaying their findings, and they will obtain empowerment from youth workers and their peers. The endorsement from outside is one of the most fundamental elements to assist youth in establishing self-esteem and confidence (Witt & Caldwell, 2005). According to the research from Yang (2010), rural Chinese children are only able to access elementary education in the school, and most of them even cannot obtain sufficient training on liberal arts, not least leadership, and social engagement. Giving presentations of their work will let them know what they can do, primarily when they are located in a new environment. The presentation will be 10 to 15 minutes, and giving a presentation will help them to summarize their results and discoveries so that they can compare their outcomes with that of other groups. After the presentation, youth workers will provide feedback, which primarily focuses on praising children's performance for helping them establish sufficient self-esteem and confidence to obtain positive future development.

### **Second Activity**

In the second stage, children will primarily implement the connection with peers who live in urban areas. These urban peers will have similar age with these rural children and will discuss with rural children about their study life and daily routines. This example of one activity in this stage (Appendix C) will not only help rural children get familiar with their future study life but also let them build a connection, which is a part of 5 C's, with others. All peer candidates have previous volunteering experiences conducted by other positive youth development organizations and will have been trained by the youth workers, so they are less likely to look down upon rural children. The research from Larson (2006) indicates that youth have a firm reliance on establishing connections with others when they are in a strange environment. The rural Chinese children lack resources in accessing educational support in both knowledge and mental health since they are young. Hence, positive youth development programs need to find approaches to bring a sense of safety and positive relationships with

local people. Compared to adults, children are more likely to listen to guides from same-age friends, and productive peer relationship will facilitate their cognitive process of the world (Madsen et al., 2011). We decided to select same-age peers since young children prefer to listen advice from the similar-age friends than listen to older-age mentors (Madsen et al., 2011), and establishing relationships with similar-age children can help rural children obtain more sense of belonging and safety. To better shorten the distance between rural children and their new environment, it is necessary for them to establish a connection with local elements such as schools, people, and social activities. During the initial stage (adaption period), it is imperative for rural children to establish an active connection with others, with both youth workers (adult mentors) and similar-aged peers. Peers who have similar life environment (study life, school, etc.) can communicate with rural children in more effective approaches than what adult mentors do.

### **Third Activity**

The third stage includes the long-term intervention between adult mentors who have a rural background and rural children. The study from Ramey et al. (2017) indicates that the youth-adult partnership can facilitate youth's identity development, cognitive process, and mental management. This intervention will be long-term, and has various components, and the following activities will be designed based on the outcomes of precedent activities. In the first activity of the third stage (Appendix D), the mentors who have rural background will offer a presentation in front of rural children to correct rural children's incorrect impressions toward the urban area. For example, since they have already seen the vast differences between urban areas and their hometown, they may feel that all people who live in urban areas have a perfect life and happiness without working hard. The research from Durlack (1998) illustrates that the significant cultural transition may generate more negative impacts than the positive one on youth's mental conditions. After the previous two stages of

intervention, these children may have confusion on their positions in urban areas. They even may experience negative emotions such as jealousy, hate, and depression. Youth workers must work on it to ensure they can continue living in urban areas with effective norm systems and value sets. The adult mentor will talk about his/her own story and share his/her transition in urban areas. Besides, other activities in stage three will also facilitate rural children's social engagements, which are explained in Appendix A.

After the presentation and the discussion, children are required to write down a reflection paper to summarize what they learn. The research from Potari, Sakonidis, Chatzigoula, and Manaridis (2010) indicates that reflective activity can facilitate young people's cognitive development and solidify their study process. During this activity, we guide them to set up personal goals for the future, and they must have a rough direction for further planning. The mentor will conduct long-term intervention based on the reflection received each time. The dynamic adjustment based on the continual feedback will profoundly improve the quality of the subsequent activities.

### **Mary's Review**

Mary, who is the senior manager in General Love Educational Center, has carefully evaluated the program structures and provided some advice. First of all, youth workers should be carefully trained to ensure the physical safety of rural children. They come to the urban area without any precedent experiences, so it is dangerous for them to move alone. She recommends that each group should be allocated at least two youth workers when they go outside if the organization has sufficient human resources. Secondly, the qualification of peer candidates and mentors should be carefully evaluated. The low-quality candidates may even reversely bring negative impacts on rural children. The eligible candidate should have primary education on positive youth development concepts and precedent experiences in

volunteering or work with children who live in unfavorable conditions (such as disability, low-income groups, family violence, early drop-off, etc.).

### **Observation within General Love Educational Center**

To better understand the situations within the Chinese positive youth development organization, a two-day observation within the General Love Educational Center was conducted. According to the investigation, more than 80% of teachers within the organization have a professional background in youth education, which ranges from community-college level to master level. The youth workers who have higher educational levels serve as higher management levels, and they are responsible for designing activities and evaluating programs. The General Love Educational Center does not put profitability as the primary focus since it already obtains sufficient funding resources from government-type institutions and private contributors. General Love mainly helps 12 to 17-year-old teenagers who are experiencing adolescence and provide corresponding mental supports. In addition, it also organizes different types of social volunteering activities, and it does not offer lessons regarding after-school professional coursework tutorials (unlike many organizations in China that provide after-school tutoring, for example).

### **Conclusion**

The huge urban-rural economic gap in China directly results in its unbalanced educational resource allocation. Some outstanding rural students must have opportunities to access urban public resources to obtain positive development. There are a lot of programs, primarily conducted by the government, that have already undertaken programs in transferring outstanding rural children to urban areas to receive higher-quality education. However, a lot of rural children do not have sufficient capacity to accept such transitions. The condition in Chinese rural areas is significantly different from that in urban areas, and rural children need support from various aspects to overcome upsets. To better support rural

children's development when they move to urban areas, this program was designed, which focuses on implementing 3 C's out of 5 C's, which are confidence, competence, and connection.

This program has three stages in total, and each step has three activities that focus on positive developmental concepts (Appendix A). The whole program is a one-year duration, and the following events will be adjusted based on the reflections and feedbacks of precedent activities. According to the research from Ullrich and McDonough (2013), the positive youth development programs which target low-income children should be at least one-year duration to ensure its effectiveness. The first activity, which is stated in Appendix B, is to help rural children get familiar with the surrounding environment by exploring the urban areas as groups. They need to finish specific tasks as an arrangement, and each group will have at least one youth worker to ensure their safety. This activity will help them build initial connections with classmates (other rural children) and obtain confidence via successfully finishing tasks. The second activity (Appendix C) aims to aid rural children to establish connections with urban peers. They will get supports from similar-age urban students. In the third activity (Appendix D), the adult mentor who has a rural background but is currently living in urban areas will speak to perceptions and misperceptions held by the rural children. Youth workers will finish this intervention with the adult mentor together. The whole program will help rural children obtain supports from different aspects: other rural children, adult mentors, urban peers, and youth workers.

China does not have a matured positive youth development system due to its strict education system. According to research from Johnson et al. (1999), the Chinese educational system prefers collectivism to personal development. For example, when a school evaluates students' performance, the leaders usually focus on the performance of the whole class rather than an individual. Under this system, instructors will pay attention to improve the overall

performance of the entire class rather than focus on the development of a specific student. Worse, some students who have “terrible performance” may suffer bullying no matter the reason. These teaching strategies depress children’s individual creativity and leadership. The mainstream Chinese educational structure encourages children to learn as much academic knowledge as possible, but it overlooks children’s individual development. However, some presumptions and research within Chinese institutional structure have proven to be applicable in Chinese children, as aforementioned in the Literature Review section in this paper. To design this program, the previous assumptions of Chinese positive youth developmental programs were researched, which are indicated by Johnson et al. (2007). In Johnson’s study, youth workers try to assist Chinese students to establish confidence within the strict educational structure. For example, researchers set up advocate programs in studying different subjects ranging from mathematics to music, so students were able to know their other talents and did corresponding planning. The program developed for this project combines personal development, which is 3 C’s out of 5 C’s, with the strict Chinese requirement of academic knowledge.

There are several limitations to this project. First of all, this program was designed for use in Beijing, China, rather than other smaller Chinese metropolis. In other cities, some activities may be changed due to different geographical conditions, educators’ perspectives on the development of rural children, and the origination of rural children (if they conduct programs due to political reasons or educational causes). Secondly, our project only provides a general framework, and more details will be developed once Mary’s organization receives a governmental grant. In this way, we are unable to know the effectiveness of this program until that time. In addition, this program may be modified and adjusted after reviewing it from senior managers in Mary’s organization. Thirdly, this program is for the long-term, but there are many factors (such as children’s study pressures and necessary adjustments within

the process) that may intervene in the development or delivery of the program. In Chinese culture, the most important thing for children to do is to study academic knowledge that will lead to professional knowledge. This program may be interrupted because rural children have to work much harder than urban children to chalk up the study process. In the future, hopefully, programs like this one can focus on how to maintain the long-term mental health and overall development of the rural children after they transfer to urban areas. They stay away from their hometown and parents, so the youth workers have to work hard to minimize the negative impacts brought by the transition. If rural children were unable to obtain supports after entering a new environment, the transferred program might paradoxically generate a negative impact on children's mental health.

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## Appendix A

### **Stage 1: Getting familiar with surrounding environments**

#### ***Core activity 1:***

Guide students to get familiar with the infrastructures in a metropolis such as public transportation systems, shopping approaches, and school settings. Most of the Chinese rural areas lack similar services, and sometimes children have to walk for a few hours to access schools. In this way, getting familiar with the regional infrastructures will be the first step.

#### ***Core activity 2:***

The second activity is teaching rural children to use the internet. The youth workers have the responsibility of teaching rural children to effectively utilize the internet to facilitate the efficiency of study and life. In the modern world, the internet has become an inevitable trend, and a lot of schools in urban areas have adopted the internet to enhance teaching efficiency. It is paramount for youth workers to guide the children to use the internet in correct ways so the rural children will be able to use the internet as the studying tool effectively,

#### ***Core activity 3:***

Another activity is encouraging rural children to “explore” the city based on their interests and share their results and discoveries with other rural students. In this way, children will be able to obtain a better understanding of their surrounding environments.

### **Stage 2: Establish relationships with instructors and classmates**

#### ***Core activity 1:***

The first activity will be “break the ice” with other rural children. In most rural-and-urban exchange programs, the rural students will be separated from local students and form

an additional class. These rural children have similar previous living backgrounds, and the “break-ice” activities can facilitate the development of mutual relationships.

***Core activity 2:***

Establish a relationship with local students and volunteers. Knowing and communicating with local students will help rural children to adapt the urban life better and earn higher-level senses of belongings.

***Core activity 3:***

Youth workers will conduct a one-to-one interview with each child and tell the children they can trust the youth workers and school instructors. It is an essential approach for rural children to earn initial senses of safety, especially when they step in an extraordinary environment.

**Stage 3: Participate social activities**

***Core activity 1:***

The organization will find and organize the corresponding social activities which fit rural children. It will assist them in infusing urban society better. These activities can cover art, music, and science, which can aid these children to explore their interests and future goals.

***Core activity 2:***

Since we intend to conduct a long-term positive youth development program, we will invite some mentor, who originate from rural areas and move to urban areas, to establish stable relationships with the rural children. These volunteers usually have experienced a hard time in transiting identity and change their destiny via education.

***Core activity 3:***

We will guide rural children to visit and do volunteering activities in lower-income-level families in urban areas. This activity will assist them to know that not everyone in urban areas has positive experiences, and life will be based on their own hard-working, education, and dedication.

## Appendix B

### Goals - for the core activity 3 in stage 1

There are three possible outcomes for this activity:

- Chinese rural students live in the environment lack educational resources, and this activity introduces them to engage in formal teamwork, which is the necessary skill to study within urban schools successfully.
- Get familiar with the urban environment through in-depth explorations of the city with a specific topic. Listening to presentations from other students will also facilitate this process.
- Make friends with other rural children through teamwork.

### Description:

This activity aims to assist rural children in getting familiar with the surrounding environment via “exploration activities” as groups. This plan will also foster communication among these children since the teamwork will facilitate the process of “breaking the ice” through intensive group work. All the rural candidates’ age ranges from 12 to 14 years old, and all of them have similar educational background in rural areas, so they are more likely to make friends with each other. Each group will select a topic, which covers different aspects of urban life and will be distributed by lot. All children are required to create their journey during the activities and make presentations as a group.

### Human resources involved:

In this activity, the two primary responsibilities of adults are ensuring children’s safety and making effective plan routines. During the “exploration process,” each student group will have at least one youth worker to ensure children’s safety and offer assistance as an emergency.

### Instructions:

Both the “selecting topic section” and the presentation section will be held in the classroom 100 at GeneralLove Educational Center. They will explore Dalian; one peaceful city has an eight-million population in China. First of all, youth workers provide topic lists: “interview some owners of the restaurant about their business and life,” “compare prices of similar products in different places,” “explore the vegetable market,” etc. Students will form groups based on the topic of interests, and each group has 3-6 students. If students were interested in other topics, they could pick it after getting approvals from youth workers. Youth workers can allocate students to different groups when some of them are unable to select topics. This activity will be a one-day duration (begin at 8 am. to 8 pm. as needed, children can have a lunch break and dinner upon their plans). Each group will be assigned a youth worker to monitor the activity process and ensure the safety of children in a strange environment. Still, youth workers will not intervene in children’s plans for topic investigation.

After allocating tasks, students are free to go, and they will make their strategies to finish the project. Youth workers will explain some basic knowledge about the city and the surrounding environment to help students to make initial plans. They can go back as early as they finish the tasks, and they will make a presentation on the second day after the activity. They are required to make presentations and share their findings in front of other students and youth workers. The presentation will be the oral-format (no PowerPoint needed but recommended) and less than 10 minutes for each group. They need at least answer the specific questions under each topic, and communicate their feelings during the activity.

**Specific requirements for each topic:**

*“Interview some owners of restaurants about their business and life.”*

Students are required to select one restaurant and interview its owner about its history, originations, menu, how the owner determine the price for each meal, what the restaurant and the owners' routine, etc..

***“Explore the vegetable market.”***

Students need to know the price of at least ten kinds of common vegetables (kale, cucumbers, carrots, tomatoes, potatoes, etc.). In addition, they are requested to consult at least three stallholders about their daily routines, how they determine prices, their family, etc.

***“Compare prices of similar products in different places.”***

Students will know the similar products may have different prices in different places. They will compare the prices of some standard daily necessities: toothbrushes, cooking pans, vegetables, bowls, etc. among local Walmart, supermarket, or different brands. During the presentation, students are encouraged to conclude the reasons for these differences.

## Appendix C

### Goals – for the core activity 3 in stage 2

- Establish relationships with peers.
- Get familiar with the urban social environment via social activities.
- Cultivate teamwork skills.

### Description:

This activity will focus on the connection between rural students and urban children via offering interview sessions between rural children and urban children. Having local friends will facilitate the process of adaption and benefit their mental health. This activity will set up “peer groups,” which comprise of urban students and rural children. The age of urban children ranges from 12 to 14 years old, which has the similar age with rural children. We will cooperate with other non-profit organizations to set up an official long-term peer mentor program which comprises of one urban student and several rural children. This program will recruit civic student volunteers who are willing to offer assistance to rural students. To ensure the urban children will not look down rural children, we will carefully design the training program for volunteers. In addition, all the municipal candidates need to have already attended other volunteering programs (as a prerequisite).

### Human resources involved:

We will cooperate with the youth workers in other youth development organizations and make corresponding plans in drafting the program, allocating groups, and designing activities. Besides, we will recruit volunteers from local middle schools to promote our peer mentor program.

### Instruction:

This activity presumes that the peers have equipped with a stable mental condition and healthy norm system, so he or she can lead rural children to adapt the urban life better.

The instruction will directly display the interview session, which will occur in the classroom at GeneralLove Educational Center. This session's duration is 9 am. to noon, and the children who have "go out requests" will have an extra afternoon to conduct outside activities.

**First step:**

Before the official interview session, rural children will be informed some topics which they can ask urban peers. These topics include:

- What is your daily routine? How do you get to school?
- What is your favorite subject? How do you study it?
- What do you do after school? Do you need to do particular chores after going back home?
- Do you have any plans for the future?
- What and how do your teachers teach you?
- Who is your favorite teacher, and why?
- Why do you think it is essential to study?
- How you go shopping? May I know your parents' jobs?

These questions are example topics offered to rural children. They can ask other questions as well. In addition, they can conduct outside activities (for example, visit peers' schools) after obtaining approvals from youth workers. If they do so, one youth worker will accompany them to ensure their safety, but she will not conduct additional interventions regarding the interactions between two-sided students.

**Second step:**

The rural students and peers will meet in classrooms and are separated into the group – each has three rural students and one urban student. After the session starts, they will introduce themselves one by one, and then rural children can ask questions. They will communicate their different lifestyles. If rural students are interested in urban living

environments, they can go outside, and one youth worker will follow; the rest of the children who do not have such requests will take rest during the afternoon.

**Third step:**

One day after the presentation, rural children will gather in the same classroom, and give presentations to share their experiences and what they learn from peers one by one.

After the presentation, the youth worker will provide the corresponding summary of the activity and encourage rural children to make local friends.

## **Appendix D**

### **Description of Core Activity 2 in stage 3**

Stage 3 has multiple activities that will conduct the long-term intervention. This activity is the first component that aims to foster to assist rural children in establishing correct cognition of the urban areas. After the previous activities, they have already known that urban areas have an abundance of recourses for personal development. However, they need to know that obtaining a sustainable life requires hardworking and high-level dedication. All the rural participants' age ranges from 12 to 14 years old, and they have not formed developed norm system yet. If they have incorrect impressions on urban areas, they may subsequently feel confuse for their self-identity. In this way, in this activity, we will invite adults who have similar rural backgrounds to give presentations to share how they successfully adjust their life in urban areas.

#### **Human resources involved:**

Youth workers will be responsible for evaluating the presentation materials before the tutorials given by volunteers, which is recruited or elected by other positive youth development programs. The core of this activity is to help rural children “correct” their impressions of urban areas. For example, some children may think everyone lives in urban areas have a perfect life, and the urban people can access an easy life without costs, etc..

#### **Instructions (to conduct presentation):**

In the first step (2-3 days before the presentation), the youth workers will ask each child to write down their impressions of the urban area and submit it to the youth worker (anonymous). Then the data will be delivered to the mentor, who has a rural background but is currently living in urban areas to prepare the presentation. Youth workers will summarize these data as well to know rural children's true feelings.

One day before the formal presentation, the mentor needs to hand in the presentation material (PowerPoint). The manager of the youth worker evaluates speakers' presentation materials, which should target the real-life condition in urban areas, educate rural children to think about what they want to be after growing up, and guide them to build plans to access it. The presentation will primarily mention how rural students can stay in urban areas if they want and explain that not all urban people have perfect living conditions.

The presentation will be delivered in the classroom and will be divided into two components. The two elements have a one-hour duration in total. The first part is the formal presentation, which is delivered by the mentor. In the second part, the rural children will form small groups (2-3 persons each) to discuss what they want to do after growing up. They will share their thoughts with mentors and youth workers immediately after the discussion. After that, the mentor will discuss what they need to do if they want to chalk up their dream. Each small group will be allocated one youth worker to inspire children to imagine their future bravely. After the discussion, each child is required to state their dream of future in front of the whole class one by one. Children are free to ask questions after presentations. Most of the questions will be answered in a timely manner.

After the presentation, youth workers will deliver another presentation, which concludes the main points of the previous student survey. Youth workers will ask "I have some feedback from you guys, for example, 'all urban people live in happy life without hardworking, is it right? If not, why?'" All students can freely express their opinions. If there is no child to answer, youth workers will randomly pick some. Students are required to write a reflection paper about what they learn after it. We will utilize these reflections to evaluate the effectiveness of this activity and regard it as references for further research and intervention.

