

A Scalable Model for developing free voluntary reading through School Libraries in Rural China

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Introduction

This report provides recommendations for the Chen Yet-Sen Family Foundation (CY-SFF) reading projects in rural China. The report is based on a combination of observations to visits to project sites in a number of Chinese provinces; review of the relevant literature; interviews with stakeholders and others with relevant expertise and experience; feedback from the *Reading to Learn Conference*; the writers' expertise and experience.

Summary recommendations

1. Focus on the development of the reading habit via free voluntary reading.
2. Target children from birth to 12 years of age.
3. Target schools rather than other agencies.
4. Create links from home to school and from Kindergartens to Primary Schools.
 - a. Insert condition on funding of Kindergartens that they show how they will create links to children of pre-school age
 - b. Insert condition on funding of Primary Schools that they show how they will link to Kindergartens. If Kindergartens do not exist then they should show how they will create links to children of pre-school age
5. Target rural areas that are accessible for purposes of:
 - a. monitoring and evaluation
 - b. partnership with local NGOs who have robust links with Local Education Authorities
6. As part of the mutual obligation between CY-SFF and the local NGO require that the local partner be actively involved with the project holder. Such involvement could include the creation of special activity days on a monthly basis. This intervention would then link into the M&E requirements.
7. Sponsor projects that are chunked, or that have the capacity to be chunked. Avoid single sites that cannot be networked.
8. Avoid a collection only mentality. Ensure that the library or reading room will be appropriately staffed and equipped. Staff should focus on creating an inviting atmosphere where children feel comfortable. Staff should support

this by means of displays and activities that enhance the appeal of the collection.

9. Partner with a professional organization to develop training materials and provide a regular training program (initial plus ongoing training).
10. Build substantial collections. Work with a target of 10 items per child.
11. Involve stakeholders in building the collection. Require that the recipient provide a profile of the client groups and their interests.
12. Balance content of reading materials with appeal.
13. Consider building a partnership with one or two publishers and one or two booksellers.
14. Ensure that the library/reading facility is as attractive as possible. Consider heating and cooling and appropriate seating.
15. Ensure that books are appropriately displayed, where possible with covers exposed.
16. Large collections require at least a rudimentary classification system to facilitate access. Encourage library staff to apply one.
17. Access to the collection is important. Target access by demand, allowing reasonable time for reading. Applicants should demonstrate how their students will gain access:
 - a. during the school day. Limiting this to lunch time and other set breaks is inadequate
 - b. during vacations

18. Minimize processing and circulation costs and time through:
 - a. computerization of circulation processes
 - b. purchase of cataloguing records and bar codes at point of sale.
19. Focus on simplicity with respect to monitoring and evaluation. Use measures that demonstrate that children are gaining enjoyment from reading. Develop M&E templates.
20. Each project should span a three year period with an early checkpoint then checkpoints at yearly intervals. Projects should demonstrate willingness to cooperate with CY-SFF requests to visit and monitor progress. Link drawdown of funding to performance.
21. Aim for high visibility so as to attract the right target group. Continue to develop attractive web presence and include:
 - a. all needed forms in Chinese and English
 - b. map of all projects
 - c. success stories from projects
22. Convene an annual conference to enable networking and to foster new projects and the development of strong partnerships.
23. Consider the development of a distinct program to support the publication books for children by young authors.

Literature review

Introduction: factors influencing effectiveness of reading programs

Based on the evidence of reading programs in a range of different countries, both developed and developing, it is clear that there are some common factors that affect the success of reading programs. Some of the factors are clearly favourable to reading projects; some may lead to positive effects or negative effects in different situations and with different implementation methods. To successfully implement and maintain reading programs, reading program directors and sponsors need to be aware of success factors that can maximize the effect of programs, and eliminate or reduce obstacles.

This review of the literature covers major education and library databases such as *ERIC* and *LISA*, as well as books, internet sites and some unpublished materials. It is not a comprehensive literature review of all the literature dealing with reading programs: it focuses on issues seen as relevant to the proposed reading model. Where the content can be applied to reading programs in rural China, sources dealing with reading programs from developed countries are included.

The literature has been divided into a number of headings in order to clearly group similar materials.

Administration and planning

Successful reading programs, no matter whether local, national, or worldwide in scope, demonstrate that systematic and detailed administration work is a key factor contributing to a program's success.

The application of project management methodology and techniques increases the chances of success. This begins with the initiation stage. Proposals need to conform to a set of prerequisites likely to result in success. There should be careful planning, a systematic implemental process and suitable evaluation methods for the programs. As the characteristics of target audiences and the reading environment (e.g. culture, physical environment, economic and political conditions) vary in different countries, communities and schools, programs require carefully planning during the content design, and implementation stages of the project to match users' needs.

The student reading program in Qidong Special School in China (2006), shows that forming different teams with clear responsibilities can maximise the utility of human resources. Room to Read programs and Book Flood in Sri Lanka indicate the importance of well designed administrative supports, and appropriate monitoring and evaluation methods (Grayson, 2006). The partnering schools, local organizations, and sponsoring foundation should dedicate resources and budget to administration of the reading projects according to the projects' evolving requirements (Fudan University Department of Social Work, 2006).

Investigating reading programs in Columbia, Arboleda, Chiapp and Colbert (1991) identified preconditions for program expansion that reinforce the importance of effective administration. Political commitments to support the program, appropriate administrative methods, and core teamwork during the initial stages are all important elements. The core team should move to positions of leadership during the expansion period. Administration work will affect the whole program thought the initiation, implementing, and expanding stages.

Coordination

Coordination is important during the planning and implementation of reading programs. The reports from current projects in China indicate that successful programs require good coordination and communication between the

government and the target organization, between the organization and the community, between the CY-SFF and the schools, between the school and the teachers, between the school and the parents, and among schools. This is common to other projects outside China. (Room To Read, 2007a) (Room To Read, 2007c).

The evaluation report of the Reading Guidance Program by Retired Teachers in Qidong (Gu, Chen & Zhang, 2006) suggests that regular reporting and sharing can help improve the program is a crucial factor in the ongoing maintenance of partnerships.

Reading materials

Many articles, surveys and case studies from different countries indicate that both a large volume and range of interesting reading materials are key factors for reading program success (for example, Elley, 1996b; Guth & Pettengill, 2005; Krashen, 2004a; Rodriguez-Trujillo, 1996).

Ensuring the high quality of reading materials is very important. Researchers, educators and reading programme organizers commonly agree that materials for reading programs should match the audiences' interests and abilities, and relate to their lives. The books should cover a wide variety of subjects. It is especially important that young children be exposed to colourful materials such as well illustrated stories and colourful posters and pictures. To increase the chances of attaining the requisite quality and relevance, researchers and case evaluation reports suggest that teachers, students and parents should be involved in the book selection process to ensure that the books are suitable for student's level (Guth & Pettengill, 2005). Schools should not focus on building collections that only cover curriculum materials. These materials will decrease children's interest in leisure reading and violate the original intention of a reading program (Krashen, 1993, 2004b). In addition, the assistance of other reading specialists, for example, related reading organizations, government education departments, experts from

library organisations and publishers, can provide useful information on children literature and assist in creating suitable book lists to improve book selection (Guth & Pettengill, 2005).

Purchasing materials from a single publisher has advantages and disadvantages. There may be an economic advantage as schools can obtain greater discounts based on volume of purchase and save time and effort in book selection; however, reliance on a single supplier limits choice of titles, and the available books may not best match users' needs.

In many cases, book rotation and donation of books are effective methods to provide larger collections from limited budgets. Rotation of materials can broaden content of reading (Gu, Chen, & Zhang, 2006) and it is often a first step in development of effective school libraries in developing countries (Knuth, Perry, & Duces, 1996). But transportation costs, effectiveness and timing, as well as record keeping and security of materials are complications that need to be considered (Knuth et al., 1996).

Donation is usually a short-term solution to obtain materials at a relatively low cost; however, quality may suffer. Book donation programs should be demand driven (Durand & Deehy, 1996). That is, they should match the needs of the recipients rather than being simply what is available for free. Poor quality books may discourage reading, so the quality of donated books should be assessed before acceptance.

Access to reading materials

Ease of accessibility to reading materials can encourage reading. Reading corners in classrooms, theatres, villages etc can provide easy and convenient access when needed.

Cheunwattana (2003) describes a range of different types of mobile library operating in Thailand. These include the Portable Library Project, begun in 1979 to make available recreational and informative books to rural children. Indeed mobile libraries have been employed successfully using a range of transportation to bring books to remote communities, eg by bus, car, boat (Lerdsuriyakul, 2000), bicycle, elephant (Forsyth, 2005), camel (Atuti & Ikoja-Odongo, 1999; Passchier, 2002a) and donkey (Passchier, 2002b). Mobile libraries provide convenient access to people in remote areas who otherwise would have little or no access to libraries and reading materials.

Reading instructions and activities

In a detailed study of the reading activities in of over 1,700 middle school students in the US (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001), students indicated that they most valued independent reading and the teacher reading aloud. Students also indicated that they enjoyed free reading in a quiet environment without being disturbed or distracted by other tasks (e.g. answering questions). Students in the same study also pointed out that finding good materials (a good book or a good topic) to read and having choice in the selection of reading materials were major factors in their inclination to read during class. In contrast, assigned reading (books selected by teacher) was considered as one of the worst reading experiences by students; they commented that they did not understand the purpose of reading exercises and most instructional time was devoted to activities which aimed to extend their knowledge of the content of the book, rather than to enhance their desire to read.

Teacher reading aloud was considered as a helpful activity in so far as identifying the range of materials and genres. Teachers who were very competent at reading aloud were able to engage the students. Teachers made the text more interesting to students by asking questions during the activity, such as asking students to predict what would happen in the story (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001; Perry, Nordby, & VandeKamp, 2003). This helped to increase interaction between

teacher and students, and as a result, to increase students' reading interest as well as their reading abilities.

The engagement brought about by reading aloud is in sharp contrast to witnessed evidence of student's experiences in reading programs in China, where they were usually required to complete tasks after reading (e.g. reading reports, reading notes), which tend to increase pressure on students and reduce their enjoyment of reading. Evaluation of students' preferences for reading activities should be conducted in order to understand of student's needs. Referring to the US situation, Ivey & Broaddus (2001) note:

Most importantly, students are expected to become independent readers, yet they get limited opportunities to explore their own interests in *reading*, to *read* at their own pace, or to make their own decisions about whether or not to *read* a book. In short, if the goal of instruction is to create skilful, versatile, engaged readers, then middle schools may be missing the mark.

Assessment of children's reading performance

Research evidence suggests that good readers make good learners. Where schools integrate reading into the curriculum it is essential that they measure the success of the interventions, as well as the progress of individual students. The International Reading Association (2007) provides an array of resources to enable quality assessment.

The rationale for the delivery of reading may focus upon free voluntary reading. The argument in this case is that if students read enjoyable literature they are likely to become avid readers who will therefore be equipped to read to learn. It is essential that when the focus is on free voluntary reading that any assessment be strictly related to that, rather than to other issues.

Unfortunately the tendency in an examination and testing dominated culture is to bombard students, who are being encouraged to read, with a variety of task-

oriented or mark-oriented activities such as book reports and compiling reading notes. Not only do these activities distract from the purpose of the exercise, but they also create work for someone who is required to mark the various reports. This raises the issue of whether the students really enjoy reading or just simply want to complete the tasks set by the teachers.

Rewards are often successful at increasing the probability that people will do something, and offer a particular reason for doing it. In general, the goals of reward are to change people's behavior and keep them doing something even they are no longer rewarded (Kohn, 1993). Applying a reward system to encourage reading will be attractive to some students but, as the evaluation report of Fudan University (2006) pointed out, the reward system may be counter-productive in the case of very reluctant or impaired readers who are considered failures by their peers.

Assessment of reading programs

Schools and education departments tend to focus on quantitative measures such as the usage of library materials to indicate the success of reading programs. They usually neglect the ways that the leisure reading habit is cultivated. For example, in Hong Kong, schools provide borrowing statistics to the Education Department to indicate progress in reading initiatives (Lau & Warning, 2007). These figures are easy to compile but do not take account of the full range of reading activities and sources of reading materials that children can access, for example books and magazines purchased by parents.

There are a number of guides for evaluating reading programs that have been developed in the West (e.g. Kameenui, Simmons, & Cornachione, 2000). They primarily deal with programs to improve literacy but can still be relevant leisure reading promotion. Some deal with evaluating the scaffolding to support the reading program, addressing issues such as parent awareness of language development, adequacy of school reading materials, length of time spent in

reading and the nature of materials children read (Farr & Greene, 1999), silent reading and reading aloud (Partnership for Family Involvement in Education, 2001), encouragement and engagement of the children during reading (Hagerty, Foster, & Cobb, 1998) etc.

Reading programs should include a clear mechanism for evaluating the success of reading activities, revealing the needs of students, identifying problems, and providing constructive results for improvement and further development of the reading project. Schools and organizations should organize self-evaluation with collection of both qualitative and quantitative data. Interviews, focus groups, surveys can be done to collect qualitative data to evaluate whether programs are achieving their goals. The achievement of the program should be measured by students' development and changes in behaviour rather than statistical data.

Promotional activities

Successful reading programs require promotion in order to compete with other recreational activities for children's time (Lau & Warning, 2007). In school, the purpose of reading promotion is to provide channels for students to connect to reading programs and activities. Conducting potentially large activities like reading club meetings and competitions, or similar programs like reading guidance programs can encourage students' participation in reading activities and draw their attention to the importance of reading. Promotion can also involve competitions. An example is the Battle of the Books, which began in the United States in the early 1990s (America's Battle of the Books, 2006), but has spread worldwide, including Hong Kong.

Publications such as posters, pamphlets, brochures, and reading lists (bibliographies) are considered as effective methods for promoting reading for children, parents as well as the communities. Consequently, promotion creates a positive atmosphere for reading and increases the awareness of society to the importance of children's reading.

Infrastructure: Facilities and equipment

Safe, attractive and comfortable reading areas can encourage reading. Tables and seats should be provided so that children can have a comfortable place to read. Computers can support the management of collections and reading activities, as well as the development of students (Gu et al., 2006), contributing to better catalogue access and an efficient circulation system.

Small collections can be attractively displayed and do not need sophisticated management. Once a collection reaches the size of a library, efficiency dictates the adoption of a basic library system including: book recording system, circulation system and cataloguing/classification system. These systems: improve access to materials, facilitate smooth circulation of books, and reduce loss. Some schools and other book centres may have difficulties in establishing or improving book management and circulation systems. This may be due to lack of resources to establish the infrastructure and/or lack of library skills to operate it. Assistance and training should be provided for them.

In developing countries, library infrastructure and trained staff are not always available. Successful reading programs can still be introduced and thrive. Examples include the Osu Children's Library Fund in Ghana (Cowley, 2001). In developed countries there are also examples such as the Bring Me a Book Foundation

Training of library staff

There is significant evidence that school libraries can have a profound effect upon student learning (e.g. Hay, 2005; Lance, 2004; Lonsdale, 2003; Ontario Library Association, 2006). Lonsdale (2003) indicates that:

- A strong library program that is adequately staffed, resourced and funded can lead to higher student achievement regardless of the socioeconomic or educational levels of the adults in the community
- A strong computer network connecting the library's resources to the classroom and laboratories has an impact on student achievement
- The quality of the collection has an impact on student learning
- Test scores are higher when there is higher usage of the school library
- Collaborative relationships between classroom teachers and school librarians have a significant impact on learning, particularly in relation to the planning of instructional units, resource collection development, and the provision of professional development for teachers
- A print-rich environment leads to more reading, and free voluntary reading is the best predictor of comprehension, vocabulary growth, spelling and grammatical ability, and writing style
- Integrating information literacy into the curriculum can improve students' mastery of both content and information seeking skills; and that libraries can make a positive difference to students' self-esteem, confidence, independence and sense of responsibility in regard to their own learning

For the purposes of this review the significant results are that the extent of free voluntary reading and the professional ability of the person in charge of the library are key indicators of success. This essentially means that whilst a small library does not require the appointment of a fully qualified school librarian it does need someone in charge who demonstrates a love of reading, who knows how to actively promote reading and to engage children, who knows how to select appropriate titles and who is able to act as an advocate for free voluntary reading within the school.

Client involvement

Ultimately the roles of a school library are to provide a rich information environment and reading haven for the school population. This means that both

teachers and students should be involved in decision making about collections and services. Ignoring teachers' views results in the isolation of the library from the classroom environment. Similarly, the children's attitudes towards and feelings about the school library collection and activities have a significant impact upon its success (Elliott, Arthurs, & Williams, 2000; International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, 2001).

The research shows that students who participate in programs that connect literacy to real-life out-of-school issues and personal interests have more positive feelings about literacy programs in the school (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001). Therefore, understanding students' reading interests, and providing them with the books they want to read is very important to the success of the reading program.

Principal support

There is a mountain of evidence to support the proposition that principal support and principal influence are vital to the success of innovations in schools. This factor is especially important for the development of school library services and the success of free voluntary reading. The results of an international study demonstrate that despite local differences principal vision and support was essential to the development of effective school libraries (Henri, Hay, & Oberg, 2002; Oberg, Hay, & Henri, 2000). Henri & Boyd (2002) in a study of influential school librarians identified that the relationship among the principal and school librarian was a crucial factor in the well being of school library development.

One of the challenges for a sponsoring foundation that wants to support the development of free voluntary reading in a school environment is the fact that it may difficult to maintain an ongoing relationship with a principal since appointments may only be for a short term only; as soon as a strong relationship is formed, the process must begin again. In these circumstances the support for the school library from within the school may be inconsistent (Knowles, 2007b).

Role of teachers

“Teachers who promote the lifelong reading habit increase the chances that children will not only become effective readers but also engage in reading for the rest of their lives” (Sanacore, 2001). Teachers can provide space within their classrooms for free voluntary reading (Sanacore, 2006). This ensures that students recognise that reading is encouraged by all the school staff and is not merely something that is confined the library. In a study of social organization of reading classrooms, Dillon (1989) reported that teacher effectiveness was related to his or her ability to create a culturally responsive instruction and to build an environment in which students could be confident and successful. Therefore, teachers should be able to use strong motivational strategies to encourage students to learn independently, and have high expectations for the students’ achievement. For students who have difficulties in reading, teachers should pay additional attention to and provide adequate assistance (International Reading Association, 2000). However, in most of the developing countries, teachers may not be well trained with practical skills. To improve this situation, it is encouraged to have more sharing between teachers (retired and current) and librarians and others with appropriate expertise, which can provide chances for them to learn from other’s experiences, and to establish a “best practice”.

Role and impact of parents

Positive experiences with literacy from an early age and support for reading-related activities at home are important factors for predicting success in reading (Heilman, Blair, & Rupley, 1998; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Parents are best placed for having an impact on children’s early reading behaviour (Sangkaeo, 1999). According to Bus, van Ijzendoorn and Pelligrini (1995), "the single most important activity for building understanding and skills essential for reading success appears to be reading aloud to children." The positive educational and literacy effects of reading to young children was recognised in the literature in the 1980s (e.g. Wells, 1985; Wells, Barnes, & Wells, 1984). This view has been

investigated and confirmed by a number of studies (e.g. Burgess, 2002; Hazzard, 1996; Lee, 2005; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998).

A recent study of primary age students in Hong Kong indicates that parental support for reading is highly correlated to adoption of an active reading habit by children (Lau & Warning, 2007). According to the U.S. Department of Education, families play a pivotal role in helping young children to learn how to read and the involvement of parents in school reading programs is very important. By reading in front of their children, parents act as exemplars of good reading habits (Partnership for Family Involvement in Education, 2001), demonstrating that reading is enjoyable. It also suggests that parents should monitor their children's progress in school by visiting the school and enquiring about its reading programs to identify if their children need help in reading (United States Department of Education, 1997). Research in the United States demonstrated that children who were below average readers involved in a systematic home reading program performed better at reading than those who did not (Faires, Nichols, & Rickelman, 2000).

It has been noted that parents traditionally expect teachers to engage more in direct curricular instruction and give children more homework in order to improve children's academic performance, rather than emphasizing the importance of children's reading ability and interest. This can result in incongruence between home and school literacy practices, especially for children from low-socioeconomic status communities (Perry et al., 2003). To address this problem and maintain consistency in reading programs, promoting family reading activities is recommended. Daily reading time with children and an easily accessible reading area at home with books that interest children will encourage children to read at home in their leisure time (Partnership for Family Involvement in Education, 2001; United States Department of Education, 1997). This is also the thrust of the Bring Me a Book Foundation's *First Teachers* program (Bring Me a Book Foundation, n.d. a).

In developing countries, parents with little or no literacy skills are an obstacle to

promoting reading to children (Elley, 1996a; Greaney, 1996). Conducting family literacy programs which help parents to improve both their parenting (e.g. provide readings about parenting and parenting education) and literacy skills (e.g. adult education), so that they can provide children with early reading may address this (Schwartz, 1999). Educating the parents in literacy skills may change their attitudes towards the value of reading and enhance reading promotion to children.

Role of volunteers

Schools and libraries have a long history of using volunteers. Research indicates that the intervention of volunteers in children's reading activities to provide instruction and supervision can assist teachers in the teaching of reading (Elliott et al., 2000). Volunteers include family, parents as well as people from the community. Volunteers may not have qualifications in teaching or reading instruction, so structured training should be provided to volunteers (Elliott et al., 2000). One of the authors participated as a parent volunteer in 2006 in a primary school reading program in Hong Kong.

Reading programs in developing countries make use of volunteers, for example, the Osu Children's Library Fund in Ghana (Osu Children's Library Fund, n.d.) and Bring Me a Book Foundation (Bring Me a Book Foundation, n.d. b) recruit volunteers.

Library volunteers can undertake routine tasks that free the librarian to perform more professional duties including planning and undertaking reading activities. Volunteers require management and training. There are a number of guides that provide advice on how to accomplish this (e.g. Driggers & Dumas, 2002; Hoagland, 1984; Reed, 1994).

Partnerships

There are many examples of partnerships between donors, recipients, local communities, government departments, non-government organizations (NGOs), and private enterprises that provide important support for book and reading programs. The Room to Read Foundation is perhaps the world leader in supporting the development of school libraries in developing countries. Room to Read projects always involve a partnership with the local communities. Room to Read list their partners on their website (e.g. for Cambodia, Room To Read, 2007a). The Babies Who Read, Succeed! project, is a good example of a program targeting children before they reach school age (Lee, 2005). This type of program could be a component of a partnership where the principal recipient partners with the local community to reach out and provide reading materials to expectant mothers.

Theoretical Framework

This model draws together material from a number of different frameworks that deal directly or indirectly with reading. The models are:

1. Free Voluntary Reading (Krashen, 2004b, etc)
2. Information Transfer Cycle (Choy, 1996; Lancaster & King, 1981, etc)
3. PEST analysis
4. 5 Dimensions of Customer Service (Zeithaml, Parasuraman, & Berry, 1990)

Systems analysis is used as an analytical tool to identify the components of the reading model, and their relationship

Free Voluntary Reading

Based on his research and the research of others, Krashen concludes that time spent on reading without associated tests and exercises has a positive effect on reading behaviour. This enhanced reading has flow-through benefits to academic performance etc.

According to Krashen (2004a),

We know enough to state the optimal conditions for a good reading program: They seem obvious but are rarely present: (1) A great deal of interesting, comprehensible reading material; (2) A time (and comfortable place) to read. (3) Minimum accountability (eg no required summaries or book reports). Also, to show effects, a program should also last for more than a few months.

He continues,

We can still expect benefits when conditions are not optimal. But there are limits. If conditions are truly dismal, if reading material is dull and hard to understand, if reading is done in uncomfortable surroundings, and/or if students are forced to report on everything they read, a reading program may only succeed in discouraging reading.

Because optimal conditions are not always possible, it is important to determine not only optimal but also acceptable conditions.

Information Transfer Cycle

The information transfer cycle has a range of iterations that apply primarily to the creation of new knowledge based on the use of earlier knowledge. For the purpose of free voluntary reading, the key steps involve:

- *Distribute and collect*: identifying suitable published or unpublished materials and the methods for acquiring them
- *Represent and organise*: how the libraries represent the collected publications and organise them in some coherent fashion to facilitate identification by their users
- *Access*: ways by which readers identify suitable materials that satisfy their interests
- *Deliver*: the mechanisms by which readers get the materials they have identified, and the period of time they retain them

PEST Analysis

PEST analysis refers to Political, Economic, Social, and Technological analysis and describes a framework of macro-environmental factors used in environmental scanning. It is frequently used as early process in a planning exercise. It assists in early identification of major potential obstacles, leading to the development of strategies to deal with them.

5 Dimensions of Customer Service

Elements from this customer service model are employed to highlight the need to create and maintain library services, including reading activities that attract, stimulate and sustain student interest in reading. Its elements are:

1. Reliability
2. Responsiveness
3. Assurance
4. Empathy
5. Tangibles

Reliability

Reliability is the ability to perform promised services dependably & accurately. Organisations promise to meet some client need. If they fall short of what clients expect, clients will be dissatisfied. This applies equally to school libraries as to commercial organizations.

Minimum requirements:

- Reading materials need to match user needs
- Any other related services need to be carried out at a suitable & predictable level

Success factors & obligations:

- Sufficient volume of materials
- Selection of suitable materials
- Training of library and teaching staff

Responsiveness

Responsiveness involves the willingness to help clients & provide prompt service. Customers do not like to be kept waiting, whether for service or for desired reading materials. Service needs to be timely otherwise interest will decline.

Minimum requirements:

- Access to chosen materials in a reasonable time
- Access to chosen materials for a reasonable time
- Access to alternative materials if chosen materials are unavailable

Success factors & obligations:

- Volume of materials, so that students do not have to wait for long periods due to overwhelming demand for a limited number of items
- Access systems, ie how to find desired materials effectively and efficiently
- Circulation system to facilitate lending, return and reservation
- Ability to reserve items
- Culture of timely return of materials
- Culture of sharing materials and information about materials

Assurance

Assurance includes the knowledge & courtesy of employees & their ability to convey trust & confidence. Even when clients are given the correct information, it should be presented to them in such a way that they are confident that it is the information they need. Young readers need to have confidence in library staff, for example when recommending items for reading.

Minimum requirements:

- Trained staff able to provide advice on suitable reading materials
- Printed lists or equivalents of materials matched to needs & reading levels
- Participation in communities of practice to maintain and improve standards

Empathy

Empathy involves caring, individualised attention provided to the client. To empathise with a customer/client, the employee should try to put him/herself in the position of the customer. This contributes to client focused activities and procedures rather than rule-bound approaches to service provision. As noted by La Marca (2003), the role of the librarian in the reading program is critical for its success. Apart from providing efficient services, library staff should encourage a respect-rich reading environment.

Minimum requirements:

- Trained staff able to devote time to students at a group and individual level
- Creation of a welcoming environment

Tangibles

The appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel & communications materials are important for attracting and retaining clients. Facilities should be inviting, clean & suitable for the services provided. As noted by La Marca (2003), when investigating reading programs it is important to address,

The ambience within the library space and how this assists the teacher-librarian in creating a welcoming environment conducive to encouraging reading, including factors such as layout and display

Minimum requirements:

- Stand-alone space for collection and reading activities of adequate dimensions
- Classroom space or equivalent for reading and related activities
- Heating & cooling
- Comfortable desks & chairs
- Props & decorations, sourced from outside and within the school community
- Hygienic, clean and well ventilated space

Systems analysis

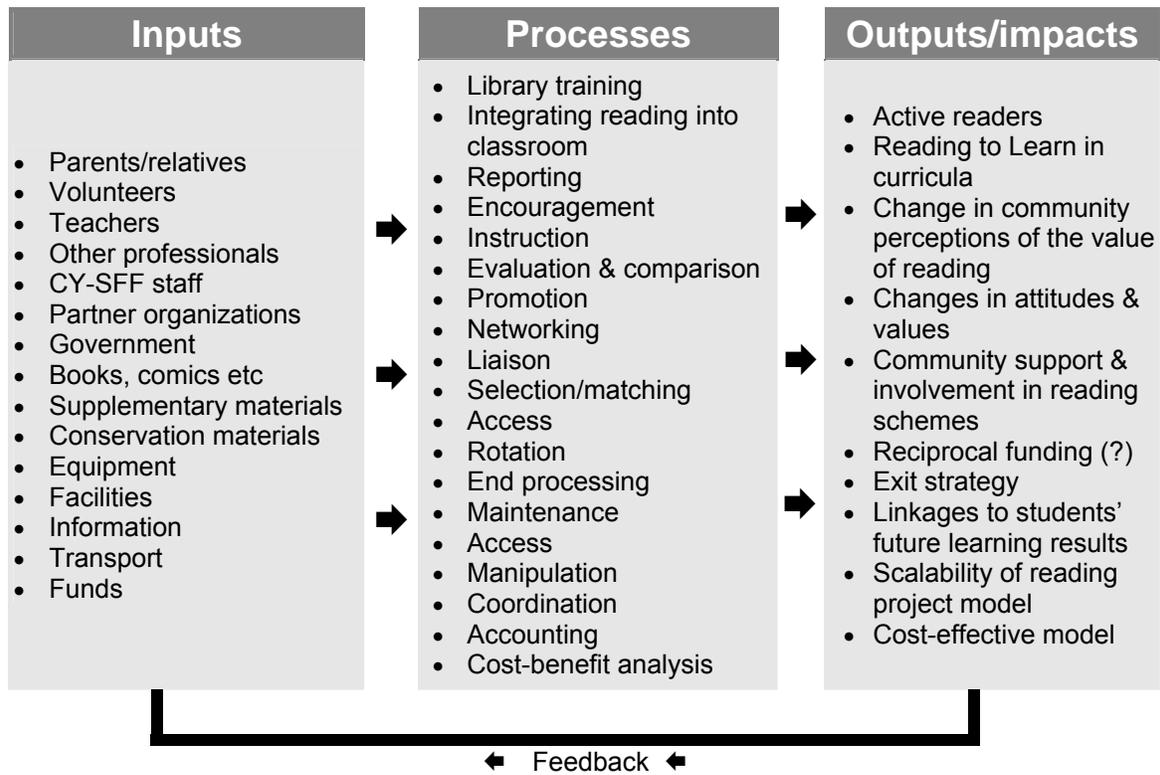


Figure X : System model

Inputs

Human Resources

Parents/relatives - home support for reading

As indicated in the literature review, early (pre-school) impact of reading, i.e. being read to, is an important factor in acquisition of the reading habit. The site visits indicated that there are many challenges to be addressed with parental influence on reading. Investigation suggests that in many cases parents do not read at home; indeed they may not possess any books. In Gansu, one of the visited homes had no books. In Qidong, mothers of kindergarten aged children stated that their husbands lived remotely, near their work. In Anhui, parents

indicated that their farm work was long and exhausting; they had no time to read. In Yunnan, some parents admitted that they illiterate. In other situations it is clear that parental support for reading at home was present. Children and parents at an urban school in Hefei (Anhui) spoke of collections at home. Parents in Qidong described their children's home reading practice. Parents in Anhui described the sharing of stories between mother and child of middle school children. All parents interviewed expressed support in their children's reading development. The majority focused on the academic benefits that their children directly and/or indirectly gained from reading. Some spoke also of the enjoyment derived from free voluntary reading. It should be noted that these interviews almost certainly overstate the support that children receive at home, as the parents interviewed would not have been chosen if they did not support the reading programs.

Volunteer work in the library

There was no evidence that parents were actively involved as volunteers in the school libraries or reading programs. This potential source of manpower and moral support should be investigated (see *Library Training*).

The Qidong Retired Teacher's Association (QRTA) were very forthcoming in providing evidence of their participation in school's reading programs. They have also supported the schools in other ways by selecting book titles etc. The QRTA are clearly a very valuable support. From our investigation, their focus is mainly academic, i.e. they are providing students with guidance for functional reading, including comprehension, reviews etc. We recommend that they continue with their programs, with the proviso that they scale back on the exercises and increase their focus on supporting and guiding free voluntary reading.

Teachers

Interviews in Hefei, Qidong and Anhui indicate that teachers are setting school work that requires the use of books. With respect to free voluntary reading, some

school exercises contained non-scholastic elements, e.g. requiring students to write their feelings about situations and characters in books they have read. Beyond this, and expressing general support for reading there is little evidence that teachers were active in supporting a reading culture at the schools. This does not include those teachers who have been appointed as librarians, who have taken an active role in encouraging reading, e.g. in Yunnan and the urban school in Hefei. We recommend that all teachers demonstrate support for free voluntary reading and participate in reading promotion activities. This is necessary if a whole school approach to reading is to be successful.

Other professionals

As noted earlier, the QRTA have participated in functional reading programs in the Qidong schools. There is also a role for professionals to play in the selection of book titles for the donated collections. The Hong Kong Teacher Librarians' Association (HKTLA) has indicated an interest in providing this assistance. This opportunity should be pursued.

CY-SFF staff

The small number of CY-SFF staff in China and their lack of expertise in reading instruction and library science limit the direct input they can have in local reading programs or book selection. Potential areas include assistance in completing applications (some evidence of difficulty with this in Anhui); facilitating training on the content of reading programs (see *Library training*); suggesting book titles for the collections; facilitating feedback; facilitating the creation of communities of practice.

Partner organizations

NGOs

NGOs can play a vital role in the success of projects as ideally they can provide personnel on the ground with experience in other reading programs. For example ShanHun Enterprise seem to provide very effective support for the project in Zhejiang. However in Gansu, Qidong and Yunnan there was evidence that the partner had chosen unsuitable titles. This issue of poor match of titles to needs was a constant issue. It seems that the overriding factor was the inability of the NGO to differentiate between the quality of items, as compared to their cost. The offering of large discounts by booksellers was often just too attractive to resist.

Local education authorities (LEA)

Cooperation is essential to avoid obstacles and take advantage of the resources that the local education authority can provide. In Yunnan, the LEA has applied significant amounts of manpower to assist in the program. Evidence indicates that this support has been well intentioned but lacking in some expertise. In Qidong the QRTA keeps close links with the LEA, smoothing the way for cooperation. In Anhui, the LEA is involved in the programs and is initiating programs. Close cooperation with LEA needs to be maintained: the positive scholastic outcomes of adopting a reading habit should be emphasized, but LEA should be made clearly aware, and acknowledge, that the CY-SFF's projects are focusing on FVR.

Government

CY-SFF should of course build on its existing government contacts to facilitate its projects, especially the LEA, as indicated above.

Material resources

Books & other reading materials

Nature

Evidence from every visit to rural China indicates that certain types of reading material are popular and some are less/not popular. Clearly for the reading habit to be nurtured the materials need to be engaging to the children. This has also been evident in exposure to the materials from other foundations such as the OSU Children's Fund, and Room to Read. Room to Read has commissioned customized book publication featuring local authors. While this has resulted in suitable materials for children, and should be investigated for the Chinese projects, the Chinese book industry/market is sufficiently large and well developed that it should not be necessary. We recommend that the CY-SFF focus solely on reading materials that are non-curricular; that is, materials that children would choose because they are appealing and engaging. These materials should be recognized as high quality works (see *Selection*). A visit to one of the Qidong schools illustrated the problem. The shelves in the school library were covered with dust. The reading corners in the classrooms were a mess. But the interviewed students were extremely enthusiastic about what they were reading and dived into their bags and desks to produce their current title. All of these titles had been purchased by parents.

Quantity

There are various metrics available to indicate school collection sizes in developed countries, e.g. 10 titles per student in United States elementary schools in Virginia (Virginia Board of Education, 2006) and North Carolina (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2005). These include curricular materials, so the rate for recreational reading is significantly lower. In developed countries children have sources for recreation materials outside their school libraries. This is not the case in rural China, especially for primary-age children.

Supplementary materials

There are many activities that can stimulate the desire to read. These activities can include the use of supports for storytelling such as props, posters and workbooks. Target recipients should demonstrate some willingness to provide basic materials for the creation of these props.

Conservation materials

It is important that materials be maintained in the best possible condition in order to provide maximum use (i.e. number of readings) and optimum reading experience. High demand items incur high physical stress. To prolong the usable life of the materials, the CY-SFF should provide a basic conservation kit with instructions to each recipient. Basic training in material conservation should also be provided to the librarian. The librarian should be then responsible for training library helpers and instructing children in conservation.

Equipment

In all the schools visited, equipment had been provided, including bookshelves, desks, benches, chairs etc by the schools. In Yunnan, the CY-SFF provided bookshelves. The functionality and aesthetics of the equipment varied from school to school. In some schools, the equipment was appropriate, e.g. the CY-SFF kindergarten in Qidong had mobile shelves which could be rotated among classes, ideal for small collections and not requiring a physical library. In some schools the desks and benches were barely fit for use. While accepting that the material resources of the schools are low, it is important that the library be an inviting and functional place. The CY-SFF should create a list of recommended furnishings for the libraries, including: desks, chairs, shelves, notice board, trolley etc. This should take into account the characteristics of the children, e.g. for primary students, lower shelves are necessary. Some evidence that the school is attempting to provide the equipment should be sought.

In developed countries, computers are standard in schools and libraries, even at the primary level. Computers can assist the librarian to quickly complete clerical and record keeping tasks that would occupy a lot of time. This frees the librarian to undertake more activities that directly encourage reading. A basic computer with library software should be provided to recipient schools. This has training implications (see *Library Training*).

Facilities

Facilities include the physical library, reading rooms, and space for classroom collections. Facilities need to be well designed for functionality and appeal. The library should be located centrally within the school and be easily accessible. Few of the sites visited had well planned and appealing libraries. The model primary school in Qidong had a large and attractive physical space that was targeted for the library, but it was on the corner of the 4th floor, reducing its accessibility. Acknowledging that the schools are limited in the space that they can provide, the importance of a well located library should be made known to the principal.

At the very least the library space should be large enough to allow some browsing of the collection by children. It should be well lit by artificial lighting. There should be a clearly defined desk and work area for the librarian. This was the case in some of the libraries in Qidong and Gansu. It was not so evident in some libraries in Yunnan and Anhui. General advice on library layout can be provided as part of training (see *Library Training*). Ideally the library should be well ventilated. Moderate heating in winter is an advantage.

The attractiveness of a library is an important ingredient for creating a welcoming atmosphere. Room to Read reading rooms visited in Cambodia provide good examples of this, as do the community centres developed by the Osu Children's Library Fund in Africa. Libraries can be made attractive in an inexpensive fashion by decorating them with materials that students have created. This also

encourages a sense of ownership of the library by its users, a point noted by Kathy Knowles (2007a) in the Ghanaian community libraries. While it was evident to some extent in some of the libraries visited, it was absent in others. Tips can be provided as part of training (see *Library Training*). A basic pack of posters with a reading/books theme can be provided by the CY-SFF.

Information

It is evident that standard library practices and reading schemes have not been introduced due to a lack of relevant information. To some extent training will address this issue. However training is by its nature generalized. Communities of practice need to be established to share information about successful practices in specific situations and to find solutions to problems. Ideally this communication would be direct and fast, i.e. between the librarians themselves using email. However this may pose problems due to lack of access to ICT. A possible role for the local partners/NGOs to record these problems and forward them to the CY-SFF, which could then share them with other projects. There is also an advantage for the CY-SFF to record problems, issues and solutions to proactively improve the projects.

Transport

The remoteness of some sites incurs costs for transportation of books, CY-SFF staff and others. This directs resources towards overheads rather than materials. Balancing this is the fact that the remotest sites are the most in-need. If remote locations are targeted it makes sense to support a number of projects in a group ('chunking'), rather than to support one-off projects.

Accurate calculations also need to be made concerning the costs of transport for mobile libraries, e.g. in Yunnan compared to the opportunity cost of purchasing additional materials for fixed collections.

Funds

The issue of fundraising is outside the parameters of this report. However it is important to note that the goal of minimizing overheads and maximizing the proportion of funds on reading materials has implications for the level of effectiveness of use of the reading materials and their contribution to reading habit development.

Processes

Library training

During the site visits there was evidence of enthusiasm, but little evidence of effective librarianship skills among the among the library staff. This needs to be addressed as a priority. As noted by keynote speakers at the Reading to Learn conference, the librarian (or equivalent) needs to be a driving force for reading. Carrying out effective library tasks will enhance the value of the reading materials. A professional partnering body such as the Hong Kong Teacher Librarians' Association should compile a training package, and plan a training program for librarians. This should involve basic library techniques as well as reading promotion activities. Additionally a program to educate teachers in techniques for integrating reading into classroom and assessment activities (independent of a reading program) should be planned and implemented.

On the evidence of the attendance and feedback on training undertaken in Yunnan and interest expressed for training in Anhui, there is recognition of the need for training among the Chinese teachers and librarians, and enthusiasm in participating.

Integrating reading into classroom

It is critical to emphasise the importance of reading wherever possible. For primary schools there should be regular time made available for reading aloud by the teacher, and silent reading by students. This should not have any assessment attached to it. Teachers also need to be made aware of the advantages of, and techniques for integrating reading into the classroom for curriculum purposes. The HKTLA have already operated training in China for this purpose, so they should be sought as a training partner.

Of course CY-SFF has set the focus on reading in the context of school libraries and there is little opportunity to transfer this development into the classrooms. But, it is possible to consider a school's plan for this when dealing with applications for funding.

Reporting

Reporting should fulfill the following roles:

1. Confirmation that resources are being appropriately utilized
2. Confirmation that programs are being initiated and sustained
3. Confirmation that the partners are fulfilling their roles and obligations
4. Confirmation that the goals (i.e. cultivation of reading habits etc) of the projects are being achieved

Roles #1 and #2 can be confirmed from documentary evidence and independent reporting by partners. Note that is important for the partners to have some distance from each other to ensure the integrity of reporting. Quarterly reporting would provide a balance of rigour and effort. CY-SFF should develop a standard reporting form which allows for open ended responses.

Role #3 can be confirmed by independent reporting by partners (as above) and interview. Additionally, partners should take have the obligation to report problems when they occur rather than wait for a routine reporting date.

Role #4 is more problematic. While standardized tests can measure literacy development, it is more difficult to identify the adoption of a habit that will manifest itself outside the school environment. There is a role for measuring the circulation of materials. This is more likely to reflect reading activity in rural China due to the limited sources of reading materials outside the school library compared to developed countries where the majority of reading materials are sourced elsewhere (Lau & Warning, 2007). For a more reliable measure of the adoption of the reading habit it is recommended that well structured observation needs to be undertaken. This should be deeper qualitative research involving interviews with a small number of children (chosen by CY-SFF) and parents from sites as well as the librarian/library coordinator.

The experience from Gansu points to the value of the CY-SFF also observing the reading conditions in local homes. Whereas students indicated that there were books at home, site visits did not confirm this. What was confirmed was the enthusiasm from the parents for the possibility of their children enhancing their reading. Even in this very remote location parents had ambitions for their children to attend university and in many cases this was being realized. Additionally, visiting local homes identifies alternative modes of entertainment to reading, if indeed there are any.

Promotion

All partners should demonstrate an active role in promotion of free voluntary reading and reading for informational purposes. Within the school community, the reading program should be promoted in a relaxed way to parents and children. Promotion should be well-planned, involving regular reinforcement of the value of reading. Suggested examples can be “drop everything and read”, ‘reading/book week’, ‘reading out loud’ by influential personalities etc.

Schools should also identify opportunities to promote reading to the wider, local community.

Selection of materials and matching to readers' needs

This is a key element of a successful reading program. Site visits and inspection of sponsored materials demonstrate that it has not been carried out effectively in almost all cases (see *Books & other reading materials* above). An exception to this is the CY-SFF kindergarten in Qidong, where the principal and teachers had visited the publishers to see the materials before purchase. However this is not realistic for all the projects. Reliance on local book stores has not proved effective. Even the materials recommended by the QRTA in Qidong are not sufficiently engaging for students.

Access

Access to, and delivery of, reading materials is always problematic when there is an excess of demand over supply and alternative sources of books are not available. Assuming that suitable collections have been established, students need to be able to:

1. Identify reading materials that they desire
2. Retrieve the materials they want to read
3. Keep the materials for a sufficient period of time to read them

Libraries rely on catalogues, recommendations, and word of mouth to connect readers to suitable materials. Complex classification systems are unrealistic and not suitable. Library staff need to be able to group reading materials into useful categories. For example children in Anhui and Qidong identified science fiction and myths as attractive book topics. Readers should be able to identify groups of materials that match their interests. A culture of sharing information about books should be created among the children.

The length of borrowing time should be sufficient to allow completion of the book. To avoid idle time, a reservation system for books should be initiated. This also minimizes waiting overheads for readers. Circulation records should be maintained in order to identify popular titles and topics.

Collection rotation

Collection rotation can be applied to remote areas where there are clusters of schools that are reasonably close to each other. Each school may have a base collection permanently located at the school, while other collections are rotated from school to school. The advantage of rotating collections is that a broader collection (i.e. greater number of titles) is possible for a lower cost than if the same collections are duplicated on a number of sites. This needs to be weighed against administrative time, transport costs, dead time when the collections are in transit, additional wear and tear etc. This is the model adopted in Yunnan at Luxi.

There are some advantages to this model, especially as it is strongly supported by the LEA. Problems with title selection are independent of the rotation principle.

End processing

Part of the library duties involve processing books from the point of receipt to the point of use. The main advantages of well-planned end processing are that it enhances preservation of books and facilitates access. Standard end processing can be included in library training.

Maintenance

To maximize the life of books, proper maintenance should be carried out by library staff. Student librarians should also be instructed in this. Additionally, a

culture of responsible book use should be encouraged among readers. This will have practical outcomes concerning material longevity, and also reinforce the value of books to children

Accounting

Normal accounting practices should be carried out according to the CY-SFF's established standards, which include amounts for overheads.

Cost-benefit analysis

To get maximum utility from the CY-SFF sponsored materials, sites that demonstrate successful adoption of reading habits should be investigated in depth to identify some performance indicators that can be applied to all sites in rural China. In order for these standards to be established, in depth qualitative research needs to be carried out on a range of sites. After these standards are set in place, there should be investigation of all sites. Those sites that fall short of expectations should have further investigation to identify the causes; remedial action should then be undertaken to improve performance.

The Reading Program Mandala

A mandala is a symbolic design that includes a centre and periphery, used for the purpose of contemplation. It is derived from Buddhism to describe the universe. Its use in this model is *not* intended to convey any religious associations. The centre of this reading mandala focuses on the child.

Outer Circle

Philosophy

Everything that the CY-SFF undertakes and the partnerships it forges must be based upon, and be consistent with, its published philosophy.

- Building competencies in rural areas in developing countries
- Getting value for money, ie greatest impact for expenditure
- Partnerships with local communities, NGOs & other agencies
- A relationship of respect and mutual obligation with local partners

Vision

There are many aspects to, and reasons for, supporting the development of reading. It is essential that partners are clear on this and that they work in a way that is consistent to that vision. The CY-SFF has applied the following reasons for supporting library and reading initiatives:

- Increase children's exposure to reading
- Nurture free voluntary reading
- Influence community values to encourage free voluntary reading
- Influence community values to encourage free voluntary reading
- Influence community values to recognize beneficial outcomes of developing a reading habit

The importance of a shared vision among the CY-SFF's partners and other stakeholders is a key factor for reading program success.

Partnership

Since the CY-SFF is remote from the projects it must work with partners who are very close to the local politics and culture.

The principle of mutual obligation must dominate the relationship so that each party is working towards the same ends. Check points should be mandated for continuation of funding and relationship.

It is essential to work with, and through others, with shared philosophy and vision at a variety of levels:

- Local government authority
- Local community organization or NGO with good relations with target project owner
- Professional school library organization for professional linkages and training
- Local associations of authors
- Commercial sponsors
- Local bookshops & publishers

Prior to project initiation it is important to identify and verify the visions and motivations for the partners' involvement in joint projects with the CY-SFF. This will have the effect of:

- Reducing misunderstanding between the partners
- Increasing the probability of project success

It is likely that partners and other stakeholders may have different or variant visions, compared to the CY-SFF. The CY-SFF will need to address these differences to create congruence among these parties with the CY-SFF's vision.

Image & visibility

It is important to build a success story and share it with other parties. Donors, potential partners & project holders must be able to find and access the CY-SFF easily by way of a Web presence and suitable directories, and thereby be able to see:

- CY-SFF's vision and philosophy
- Application forms in native language and in English
- Criteria for vetting applications
- Criteria applied to continuation of funding for additional projects
- Examples of successful applications
- Profiles of current and past project holders
- Reports from project holders
- Success stories and audio and video snapshots from partners and from children
- Donor profiles where appropriate
- Training materials
- Catalog of books together with reviews or links to reviews
- Proceedings of related conferences and workshops
- Links to partners and professional bodies' web pages and to donors where appropriate

Attendance at the International Association for School Librarianship (IASL) annual conference by CY-SFF representative is recommended. This should include delivery and publication of a conference paper dealing with different aspects of the CY-SFF's projects, including case studies.

Scalability

Support for proposals must be built upon partnerships and based on criteria that not only provide a high probability of success but also lend themselves to scalability. Donors require evidence of success and are more likely to support projects that are scalable.

If the number of projects reaches a critical volume the CY-SFF must create a number of divisions to support implementation. Such divisions might include: Training, M&E, & partnership liaison.

Factors that need to be considered include:

Remoteness:

The more remote a project, the more difficult it is to nurture and to monitor. Balancing this is the greater need of rural communities and arguably greater potential to inculcate a reading habit among children in areas where there are fewer opportunities for recreation.

Density:

- Has the CY-SFF previously supported a project to that applicant or to applicants in the near vicinity?
- Are there additional potential projects in the location that can add scale (chunking)?

Sustainability:

Does the applicant have the infrastructure to support the project after funding is closed?

Per capita ratios:

It is more effective to support a small number of substantial library developments than a large number of projects at a superficial level. Active readers will quickly read all the materials in small library collections then be left with nothing to sustain their reading habit, unless they can obtain books by purchase, borrowing from friends, or sourcing from other libraries. This pattern occurs in developed countries as well. What is the critical mass of books per student?

It is better to have a collection comprising many titles than one comprised of a small number of duplicate titles. The problems of duplication are intensified when the duplicates are curriculum based materials rather than recreational reading materials.

Second Circle

Project Concept Initiation

Perhaps the most critical issue is to determine whether projects should be initiated within schools or by way of other community organizations.

School advantage:

- Captive audience, whose whereabouts are predictable, scheduled and known. This has powerful implications for planning and delivery of services
- Existing educated staff and facilities create a potentially suitable physical and cultural infrastructure

School disadvantages:

- Lack of continuity of staffing, especially when the position of school librarian is seen as a stepping stone or entrée to teaching
- Clash of interests, eg curriculum/scholastic emphasis rather than free voluntary reading
- Reduced access to collections during vacations

Other possibilities include:

- Community centres
- Health centres
- Local shop fronts
- Mobile libraries
- Local home(s)
- Hybrid, ie some combination eg school during term and some other agency during non-term time

Each of these locations involve advantages and disadvantages

A critical issue is to identify appropriate book titles that match the needs of the project holder. The choices include:

- Selecting titles from regular selection tools and placing orders
- Calling for donations from publishers in local language
- Calling for donations from international publishers. Some of these may be in the local language
- Calling for donations of second-hand titles
- Form partnerships with local booksellers
- Form partnerships with local publishers
- Self publish, ie fund publication of materials in the local community

Where suitable local titles are inadequate it is essential find a solution to proceed. Consideration should be given to supporting local authors, including student authors.

- Establish criteria and selection panel to determine successful projects.
- Ensure donor and partner are in place
- Set timetable for training & implementation. Negotiate checkpoints and M&E

Pre initiation planning

Books

- Develop a list of criteria for suitable books in collaboration with experts eg Hong Kong Teacher Librarian Association (HKTLLA)
- Investigate sources of books with a range of book suppliers
- Obtain samples of books
- Evaluate books against established criteria
- Create a dynamic list of suitable titles in collaboration with experts eg HKTLLA
- Negotiate discounts with book suppliers for bulk orders

- Where appropriate, arrange for local publishing of materials
- Develop and document models for collections, eg fixed, mobile etc

Equipment

- Develop a list of criteria for equipment and software in collaboration with experts eg Hong Kong teacher Librarian Association
- Investigate sources of library equipment and software
- View demonstrations of equipment and software
- Negotiate discounts with equipment suppliers for bulk orders

Training

- Develop a list of required competencies for librarians in collaboration with experts eg HKTLA
- Develop a training package in collaboration with experts eg Hong Kong Teacher Librarian Association
- Create guidelines for access, delivery and reading activities
- Create a standard planning template to apply to potential reading projects
- Build in flexibility to the planning template to accommodate local community situations. The planning template should include: initiation, planning guidelines, implementation and project completion or termination.

Initiation

Initiate feasibility study that involves a structured process to confirm:

- Evidence of understanding and support for CY-SFF's vision by target recipient
- Willingness of school to provide identified infrastructure
- Willingness of school to commit to appointment of librarian
- Willingness of school to release librarian for training
- Willingness of school to accommodate monitoring visits
- Agreement between partners on a set of performance indicators

- Willingness of school to provide data on reading progress
- Willingness of school to share experience and data with other schools, NGOs etc
- Willingness of school to act as a catalyst for reading to the wider community
- Commitment of school to continue reading program when CY-SFF financial support decreases or is terminated
- Evidence of a plan for continuation of the reading program when CY-SFF financial support decreases or is terminated

Carry out PEST analysis for every project

Identify potential local partners & supports

Identify NGO to provide local supervision and coordination. This should involve:

- Willingness of NGO to accommodate monitoring visits
- Agreement with NGO on a set of performance indicators
- Willingness of local partners and NGOs to provide data on reading progress
- Willingness of local partners and NGOs to share experiences and data with other schools, other NGOs etc

Confirm suitability of infrastructure:

- Physical space for library
- Physical space for classroom reading collections
- Fixtures and fittings
- Physical space for reading activities

Decide which model for collections is to be applied to project

Sign agreements with partners to initiate project

Planning

- Identify shortfalls in infrastructure and plan remedial responses

- Select materials to be supplied
- Confirm supply of reading materials
- Establish timetable for supply of materials
- Establish timetable for training for librarian
- Provide guidelines for access, delivery, reading activities
- Set timetable for monitoring and evaluation
- Set timetable for review of commitment to program support

Implementation

Deliver reading materials

Deliver other identified equipment

Obtain early confirmation from NGO partner or equivalent that:

- Materials are in place in library and classroom collections
- Library is functioning effectively
- Librarian is in place and carrying out required activities

Obtain periodic confirmation that reading programs are in place and functioning.

Nature of reading projects and activities should be documented

Documentary evidence should be provided of progress in reading

Data and experience is to be shared with other projects

Case studies of success and failure are to be documented and disseminated to the wider community

Termination

Preconditions for terminations include situations where:

- Funds for the project are expended
- Performance measures are consistently not being met

- School and local community are capable of continuing project without CY-SFF support
- CY-SFF sees better value in other projects

Process

Inform NGO partner of intention to terminate project

Inform school of intention to terminate project

Carry out a final review of the project:

- Document successes and failures of the project
- Add to documentation to projects database

Make agreement to make contact with school 6 months after closure to see whether reading programs have taken root:

- Document post-project progress
- Update database with post-project progress

Third Circle

PEST analysis

PEST analysis involves assessment of wider global impacts on the school, over which the school has little or no influence to change. This should recognize that over the longer term the school and its library/reading activities can influence the wider community, eg by establishing communities of practice, promoting best practice, publicizing the success of the library and reading program, and the actions of students when they become active readers and find themselves in positions to influence the community etc

Political

Potential impacts include:

- Suitability/unsuitability of adding types of materials to library collections
- Ability to import books where appropriate
- Ability to locally produce books where appropriate
- Opportunity/limitation to partner with outside organizations
- Opportunity/limitation of partnering with other schools (eg establishing communities of practice)
- Access of partners to site (for evaluation etc)
- Cooperation of local and centralized education departments etc
- Other as identified

These factors should be explored to identify any political factors that will/may have a negative impact on the potential success of the project

Strategies should be developed to eliminate or reduce the these effects

If effects are serious and unable to be addressed, non-initiation of the project should be considered

Economic

Economic impacts include:

- Ability of school to commit resources to reading projects over periods of time
- Ability of the school to provide recommended infrastructure, especially physical premises, facilities, equipment etc
- Continuing reduction in costs of ICT and software
- Ability of the school to provide suitable salaried staff and ongoing training

Note that the school's economic situation will be heavily based on education department funding policies, ie outside their level of control

Social

Social impacts include:

- Perceptions of the role of reading, especially as a means to scholastic success as opposed to a source of pleasure, an instrument of change etc
- Perceptions of the relative importance of scholastic success relative to recreational activities
- Perceptions of the importance of libraries as opposed to other facilities, eg classrooms, sporting facilities etc
- Recognition of librarianship as a profession
- Perceptions of the importance of librarians relative to other related professions, especially teachers
- Perceptions of reading as recreation relative to other leisure activities with which it competes
- Perceptions of the value of books relative to digital materials
- Community acceptance of book ownership and sharing as a norm

Technological

Technological impacts include:

- Use of ICT, software and equipment to support library operations, eg online catalogs (OPAC)
- Use of ICT, software and equipment to support reading activities
- Use of ICT, software and equipment to free up additional time for recreational activities
- Penetration of ICT as a recreational source challenging reading
- Use of ICT, software and equipment to facilitate networking and the establishment of communities of practice
- Use of ICT for promotion and visibility, eg webpages
- Use of ICT and equipment to cheaper book production etc

Inner Circle

Location

The library should be a dedicated room or rooms, ie rooms that are not used for non-library or reading related activities (eg storage). The library must be in a visible and central location. In primary schools it should be easily accessible, ie not on the high floors in primary schools. The central location sends a strong message that reading is a critical and important element of the school. This message should be apparent to students, teachers, parents, education officials and other visitors to the school. Central location also has a practical value, increasing accessibility to the physical collection.

Location can also involve classroom collections and other collections eg mobile libraries. Classroom collections should be conveniently placed and visible, reinforcing the symbolic significance of the books' space

Personnel

The library should be staffed by:

- Ideally a teacher who has some appropriate training (see training) or
- Another educated person with appropriate training ('the librarian')

Selection of the teacher librarian is a critical success factor, as an inappropriate person can block the progress of the reading program as well as the impact of other library activities. The librarian should be enthusiastic, committed, customer oriented and willing to learn continuously to enhance their library skills. Ideally the librarian should be enthusiastic in networking and sharing information, and outreach. Librarians should be active in developing communities of practice as well as promoting reading outside the school community.

It is important that the librarian's position should not be perceived by the school community as an inferior position to the teaching staff. This should involve the TL's formal position in the school hierarchy plus a salary on par with teachers. There should be some career path for the TL that does not involve migration to the teaching staff.

Student librarians should be trained to support the librarian. This should involve a maximum of 12 students from different grades to ensure some element of continuity as the student librarian leave. Student librarians should do the more routine activities that free the librarian to perform more professional and value-added tasks. This should be portrayed as an important and prestigious position for students to hold. The TL should establish a standard training package for student librarians. The CY-SFF can assist by drafting a training template in collaboration with the HKTLA or another suitable professional body.

This raises some issues concerning schools that have an existing librarian or collection custodian, and are also likely to have entrenched culture towards reading which may not be congruent with the CY-SFF's vision, for example reading as way of encouraging character building or scholastic improvement, rather than free voluntary reading.

It also raises issues concerning schools that are not in a financial position to appoint an appropriately credentialed librarian. So some flexibility is required if these schools are to be considered as partners.

Monitoring & Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation needs to suit the needs of the CY-SFF and its donors, the NGOs, the recipient school or other organization, and other stakeholders. M&E should be made as simple as possible to achieve the desired purpose which is to ensure achievement of CY-SFF goals and providing evidence of success to donors. M & E should be made as simple as possible.

M & E elements should include:

- Mutual obligation
- Matching objectives
- Minimization of overheads
- Attainment of deliverables
- Achieving partner objectives
- Achieving donor satisfaction
- Meeting local government requirements

Simplicity

The CY-SFF's aims are to:

- Increase children's exposure to reading
- Nurture free voluntary reading
- Influence community values to encourage free voluntary reading
- Influence community values to encourage free voluntary reading
- Influence community values to recognize beneficial outcomes of developing a reading habit

Evidence is therefore required to demonstrate that:

1. Children are increasing their reading and that they enjoy that reading
2. Parents and teachers enable reading opportunities and provide positive reinforcement for free voluntary reading

Qualitative research should be employed that explores the home and school reading environments. Interviews with stakeholders should be undertaken in a similar fashion to those carried out by the research team. Evidence can also be gathered by way of feedback from activities and events that are promoted by the school and which may involve parents. Such events can include participation in story telling, puppetry and drama, and by story writing competitions.

Additional baseline data should also be gathered by focus group discussion and simple surveys. This data should be gathered in Chinese and should include:

- Number of titles
- Circulation of materials, eg number of loans per student
- Range of school sponsored reading activities
- Participation rates in reading activities
- Satisfaction/enjoyment of students with the collection
- Satisfaction/enjoyment of students with the reading activities

In addition to the above, the CY-SFF should identify other key elements to evaluate and develop a draft M & E methodology and worksheets in collaboration with the HKTLA or another suitable professional body.

Collection

Elements:

- User needs analysis is important to identify what books children want to read. Popular books will attract readers; unpopular books will be a waste of resources
- Selection process: guidelines should be provided to establish criteria for book selection
- Source: preferred book suppliers should be identified based on quality, range, price, reliability, speed of supply, follow up
- Authenticity
- Language: local language materials should be identified. For pre-readers, picture books negate reliance on native language
- Look & feel: the appearance of a book is likely to affect its selection by children. A study of over 8,834 pupils between the ages of 4 and 16 in England, Reynolds (1996) indicated that,

In the youngest age group (4-7) most children chose a book by its illustrations or its cover. The 11-16 year olds chose by cover (36-44%), title (40-49%), blurb (42%), or name of author (41-44%).....Overwhelmingly the children said they chose books by themselves, although mothers, teachers, and school librarians were occasionally mentioned.

This approach should not be carried out exclusively; it should be balanced by the results of a recent survey of Primary 4 students in Hong Kong, who indicated that guidance from teachers and others in the selection of reading materials would encourage their reading (Lau & Warning, 2007).

- Display; attractive displays stimulate demand for books. Displays can also be thematic, focus on recent materials etc to attract groups with special interests, eg science fiction
- Per capita allocation: funds for material purchase should be linked to the number of children in the project, ie the more children the greater the funds allocated

Organisation

The collection should be physically organized in a way that facilitates access and delivery. Organization should be arranged according to established library principles that match the way students seek books, such as by:

- User group
- Subject
- Language
- Combinations of these

There should also be physical arrangement that enhances the appearance of the library without compromising its functionality, eg in new book displays, or author displays or thematic displays.

Within classroom collections there should also be systematic arrangement that mirrors the organisation in the library

Access

Access involves children identifying reading materials that match their needs and/or interests, and knowing where and how to find them. Access precedes delivery. There should be a variety of ways of access including:

- Identifying items by online catalog (OPAC) searching
- Scanning lists provided by librarians and/or teachers
- Recommendation by other students, librarians and/or teachers, parents etc
- Reading book reviews
- Scanning book displays: collections must be made available to the students. A dedicated space must be made available and books should be displayed in an eye catching way with at least a proportion of the collection made
- Scanning shelves (browsing): material should be arranged so that similar materials are physically located near each other
- Sourcing materials outside the school library and classroom collections

Each of these methods is valuable. Ideally children should evolve from passive, ie recommended materials to active, ie sourcing their own materials. Children require instruction on carrying out these activities. Observation of their book seeking behaviour should be observed and documented to confirm that the full range of book seeking behaviours is being carried out.

Identification of the existence of relevant items is necessary but not sufficient; readers need to be able to physically locate items in an efficient way, ie minimum searching time and high probability of success. This requires efficient organization, including physical organization.

Delivery

Delivery involves physically obtaining desired materials and holding them for suitable periods before returning them. Students' opportunity to obtain the materials they want should be made as easy as possible. This includes:

- Certainty of delivery (eg by reservation)
- Minimal waiting time
- Ease of receipt, eg by physical visit to the library, delivery to classroom etc
- Appropriate lending time, ie long enough to complete a book. This should also include the ability to renew a book if no one else has reserved it
- Statistics on borrowing activity should be recorded and retained

Activities

Any pleasurable activities that involve restating, reforming or conveying stories strengthens children's attachment to reading and also attracts members of the audience who are readers. This brings reading into the domain of sharing rather than being a solitary activity. Such activities include:

- Dedicated time for reading at school (Krashen, 2004b)
- Posters (Hopkins, 1998)
- Effective display of materials (East Dunbartonshire Council, 2002)
- Role plays
- Drama
- Reading aloud
- Literature circles (Cornish, 2003)
- Puppetry
- Competitions
- Writing
- Reading Buddies (National Association of Elementary School Principals, 1998)
- Be an author
- Meet an author

Facilities

Dedicated space is essential. The space must be inviting. If it is the most attractive space within the school then it will attract children. The space should be comfortable. That means that the furniture must be appropriate to give the message of free voluntary reading. The temperature should be the best in the school. The space should be attractive. It should be a place to be proud of. Some books should be displayed so that they are easy to identify. New books should be in a separate part of the space. Activities related to reading should surround the space so that it comes alive.

Appendix 1: Issues raised at the Reading to Learn conference

The following issues were raised and discussed by delegates at the *Reading to Learn* conference. The feedback from the delegates has been fed back into the reading model. As the delegates comprised a range of different parties to reading programs, this is considered extremely valuable feedback. Apart from its content, it provides a window to the views of partners.

Monitoring & evaluation

Questions:

1. What evidence of success is needed to meet donors' needs?
2. How do you measure 'pleasure'?
 - How does it show?
 - What do I see?
 - How does it feel?

Responses:

- Visual evaluation of environment
- Observing what's happening
- Statistics, e.g. size of collection; kinds of books; clients/readers
- Access - when, by whom; trends
- Checklist - self evaluation
- Student survey – open ended questions
- Cross project:
 - group evaluation
 - peer to peer discussion
 - training opportunities
- Third party observer
- Reading festival including the donor participation
- Organize seminars to show adoption of the reading habit
- Involvement of parents

School or other agency/location?

Question:

When should the CY-SFF choose another agency, for example a community centre, rather than choosing a school?

Responses:

- 'As the need arises'
- Depends on Foundation's purpose
- When there is a match with the environment and local needs, e.g.:
 - Village libraries
 - Community school-house public libraries
 - Mobile libraries
 - Home reading programs

Library worker qualities

Question:

What qualities, for example, education, competency, personality etc, should the library worker have?

Responses:

- No classroom teacher rejects
- Potential and willingness for training to upgrade skills
- Able to train others
- Effective communication skills
- Leadership skills
- Credibility among peers
- Passionate reader
- Likes helping others solve their problems
- Able to manage:
 - Resources

- Space
- People
- Able to engage with children and parents
- Respect for children's needs and potential
- High sense of responsibility
- Hours of availability 24/7/52
- Positive work attitude

Mutual obligation

Question:

What are the critical mutual obligations between the CY-SFF and school principals?

Responses:

- Close collaboration with educational services in the local community
- Matching school and community needs
- Provide model for others in the district
- Close supervision of funds
- Attitude to target groups
- Share success stories
- Plan for success
- Share evaluation strategies

Recreational activities

Question:

1. How do children spend their time outside school?

Responses:

- Village children – helping the family earn the living

- local sports
- City children
 - sports
 - technology
 - movies
 - shopping

Question:

2. What are their major recreational activities?

Responses:

Major recreational activities:

- Watch TV
- Computers
- Sports and games

Question:

3. How do we redirect children from these recreational and other activities into reading?

Responses:

- All discussion groups want the focus to be on student development
- Encourage reading through holidays
- Organize reading festivals

- Many children live with grandparents who may not be literate enough to read to them

Positive outcomes from reading

Question:

1. What are the linkages from reading for pleasure (free voluntary reading) to rigorous thinking?

Responses:

- Reading for fun can lead to critical thinking

- Read more, think more, enjoy more
- Reading for pleasure is a leisure activity which can also be a learning activity

Question:

2. How can reading for pleasure be measured?

Responses:

- Improvement in students' speech vocabulary and written work
- Compile students' creative writing, and bind for circulation in the library
- Display students' response to literature in exhibitions in school and public places
- Competitions for writing, poetry and music

Reading activities

Question:

Share your experience of high interest level reading activities?

Responses:

- Group discussion to allow students to talk about what they have read and enjoyed
- Relate selection of materials to student's interests, reading abilities and ages
- Keeping reading logs or journals
- Relate books in collection to current TV programs, health issues or work issues
- Teach adults to use IT for commercial gain
- Mobilize women's literacy program through drama, cultural dance, share writing
- Influence of women in home and community

- Link city and rural schools
- Mobilize universities and city libraries to recycle used books
- Educational TV
- Concept of 'Reading to Learn'
 - Textbooks
 - Teacher's personal reading experience
 - Outside influences

Sustainability

Question:

What can a school do to ensure the reading program continues successfully after the CY-SFF withdraws its financial support?

Response:

- Seek government funding based on model's success
- Seek funding for infrastructure development
 - Locally if possible
 - Foundation support
- Seek contact in ministry of education
- Publicize an exemplary model
 - give it time to grow
 - gain grass roots support
- Village library – reading habit – local support
- 'Mind once stretched never returns to its original shape'
- Put pressure on local politicians for continued support
- Develop influential contacts

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