 Why do you want to participate in Summer Volunteer Program (SVP), what is your motivation to work in rural China (if relevant, please draw on your previous experiences)? What do you want to achieve throughout your stay in it?

 Please tell us a little bit of your understanding of the role of education, especially reading, in rural China, and how SVP volunteers and their library work might fit into the picture.

 Give us confidence that you can quickly adapt to a new environment and immerse yourself into the community.

 Describe a situation where there is a disagreement among the group members, whether you are directly involved or not. How did you deal with it?

 Have you ever had experience working with children? Please describe.

 Please recommend a book that you've read to your fellow volunteers and DC community. Please tell us you reasons

Having lived for ten years in a combination of rural and urban China, my eyes have seen the differences in the standard of living between the rich top one percent of the population and the poorest farmers residing in the countryside. Both my parents grew up in the countryside and moved to Beijing when I was three. During my ten years in China we frequently visited my grandparents. The change from towering, elegant skyscrapers to brick and mud huts during the two hour journey always struck me. On these trips I always filled my backpack of small city luxuries such as Legos and candy, lots and lots of candy, to bring back to my cousins and extended family. In the present, I don’t miss the bumbling city of Beijing, but my heart yearns for the development of the countryside. I want to give back to the land that gave to me by using my talents and knowledge to water the next generation so they can grow taller and stronger.

Casual and outside-of-class reading can be a luxury that ordinary rural students couldn’t indulge much in given the responsibilities their families place on them. Most families in rural China run farms. These farms are generally different from what you and I would imagine farms to be. Living in the United States, we imagine farmers driving around efficient tractors and their labor becoming increasingly mechanized. However most of the manual labor on the farmlands in rural China are done by hand, and each pair of hands matter. Parents want their children to help them with their crops if they’re not going to school. SVP volunteers and their library work can help enrich the children’s lives with knowledge beyond the fundamental facts they learn at schools and help nurture their imagination and creativity beyond stretches of corn and wheat.

During my eighteen years of life I’ve moved twelve times, lived in two countries and three states. I’ve been immersed in Chinese and American culture and I’ve gained confidence to be able to adapt efficiently to any kind of environment. I’ve taken leadership roles in every place that I’ve lived in after I turned fifteen, be it the lead acoustic guitarist and harmonizing vocalist of my church’s worship team or dancing tango with Lincoln Park High School’s Cultural Connections Club. Every move I went through taught me lessons and improved my adaption skills.

As one of the two worship leaders at my church, I saw many conflicts come and go, sometimes solved, other times not. One of these problems was a dissention between members of the praise team on whether or not the grand piano should play chords along with the acoustic. One side of the argument was that it would be redundant for the grand piano to also play chords, and that the pianist should learn keyboard and play accompanying “chords” on the keyboard – creating a soothing sound by simply holding down the keys of the electronic keyboard. Our pianist argued the other side: the praise team has sounded fine just doing what they’re doing and the change is unnecessary. Deep down though I knew he didn’t enjoy playing the keyboard as much as the grander sounding traditional piano and so I proposed the solution. I pointed out the fact that many praise teams have keyboardists instead of pianists and they do so for a reason, change in music style isn’t bad, and that we have three people capable of playing the grand piano but no one really knows how to play the keyboard except for him. He gave in and the following Sunday we led worship incorporating the keyboard. The positive feedback we got was more than encouraging. He continued playing the keyboard until we graduated high school and left the worship team for college.

The past summers I’ve spent weeks teaching at summer camps geared towards children ages four through twelve. I received training and participated in a program hosted by the Childhood Evangelical Fellowship (CEF). After one week of training on how to teach stories, manage weeklong camps, and leadership skills, the teachers trained would go out and teach and lead the volunteers at camps. Summer after junior year I taught at three camps in northern Virginia. My team consisted usually of two or three other leaders and myself and we did everything ranging from teaching the lesson, playing review games, leading body worship (singing songs and dancing to them and teaching the dances to the kids), and playing and talking with them during snack time. An average camp day would last six to eight hours. In addition to these camps, during both of my junior and senior year summers I also went with a team of four others to Syracuse, NY to volunteer at the Father’s Heart Ministry on Lodi Street. The Father’s Heart Ministry organized a weeklong program free for any kids that wanted to participate. The main staple of kids was refugee Nepali children and African American children, all of whom were less fortunate than us teachers. During the week we would bond with them through our lessons, games, snack time conversations, and more. Saying goodbye was always the hardest.

Out of all the literary works I’ve read, the play Death of a Salesman by Arthur Miller is by far my favorite. On the surface Miller portrays a typical American family living in New York struggling and a father losing his mind, but breaking the surface he presents the fallacy of the American Dream. Moral of the story, just being “built like Adonises” won’t get you very far in life, a.k.a. if you want to live the American Dream, you need to constantly push yourself towards improvement and ceaselessly refine and better yourself. Lesson taught: hard work is the only thing that will warrant success. Something we need to know as volunteers going into China to aid the children living in rural areas is that we can easily be distracted from our goal. Just because DreamCorps provides us an opportunity to go to another country doesn’t mean we can just screw around. Our main duty is to the children there and the enrichment of their lives, giving to them what was given to us. We need to work hard in order to reach that goal.