# Project Week 2018

## Oct. 28

6a.m.

I could hear the alarm far away from me, probably from another planet, or from another century.

I woke up, sitting on the bed, with my brain blank for a while.

Then I went out from the dark dirty little room.

It was a nice day, with sun shining and birds chirping.

The breakfast was simple. I put a slice of apple between the bread. It was good.

9a.m.

We headed for some kid’s home.

The music was loud. We drove through green fields and flat houses.

The first house we visited was huge.

On the wall there was a huge family photo. The background was red and everyone was smiling.

Then we went in the living room and sat at the sofa. The girl sat beside us, on a small chair. She was smiling, but I could see the bewilderment in her eyes.

In front of us was all the peanuts and apples planted by the girls’ family themselves.

She spoke, using the very kind of English with the very kind of accent and shyness I had three years ago.

Then we introduced ourselves in Chinese.

Then silence.

No one asked a single question.

I spoke to the girl, using the voice that only we two could hear.

I learned that her mother worked in a faraway plant and came home late every day. Her father seldom came home so she lived with her sister and grandma.

So that was the end of our private conversation.

Then we asked some general questions like what she did at school, what was her hobbies…

I saw the nervousness in her eyes again.

Then I met her eyes.

I smiled.

She smiled too.

When we were about to leave, she was no longer afraid.

We took a picture together, with her little hand holding tightly with mine.

Then we came to the second girl’s home.

It was also large, with big white wall.

She spoke with a strong accent.

We asked the same questions and she played the piano for us.

I went to the bathroom in their house.

There was no sink, only a bare tap and an empty red basin trembling in the cold air.

The houses here were big, but certainly not delicate.

We went to the field afterwards.

The world was filled with greenery.

Other group members were playing with some local kids.

I talked with the principle.

“The school was big.” I said.

“Someone in Hongkong donated 10 billion for each Siyuan school.” He also had a strong accent. I tried my best to understand.

“Wow. That’s a lot.”

“Yes, we are one of the poorest cities in China now.”

“Same in my hometown ten years ago. Development here may just take 5 years now. It is just a matter of time.”

He nodded, and then shook his head.

Afternoon.

We met the Siyuan kids. They were shy but they soon opened up when we began playing games. Actually, I would rather talk to them to know them better.

## Oct. 29

A new day with fresh air and sunshine.

Also the first day of teaching.

The school welcomed us with great warmth.

We participated the flag-raising ceremony.

I was in my middle school again, I thought, probably primary school.

The school also announced the result of the sports meeting.

No one cheers.

I saw the indifference and numbness.

But when we introduced ourselves, their eyes lit up.

That was the very moment I felt the great responsibility and the meaning of the sufferings these days, and decided to do my best to teach them, to tell them that there is a brand-new world in front of them.

Then we did morning exercises with them. That was exactly what I did in the past nine years, with the same unwillingness and lifeless.

We had to change this, I said to myself.

We rushed on the stage and started leading them to dance.

Yes, dancing, not exercising.

We sang and danced and shouted.

The kids laughed.

We laughed and kept dancing till the end.

Meeting.

We met together in a meeting room to get the general information about the school. What shocked me most was not the video they played or how they managed to build the school, but was how poor the English teacher’s English was. She tried to introduce herself but the accent was so strong and the sentence structure was so simple. Maybe we should help the teachers instead of the kids, so that the kids can benefit from their teachers in the long run.

Afternoon.

That was how my first lesson started.

I felt as nervous as the kids were to spoke in front of the whole class, so I walked down the stage, talked to a group of students while they were drawing the map, and tell them easy and funny way to remember the countries’ names.

Don’t worry if you can’t do something, there is always a right place for you.

In the next class, we invited some kids to do their self-introduction. That was not successful because hardly anyone said a word, but when the first kid said “I am…”, the class laughed. I felt so bad and encouraged the kid keep going. But in no way would he spoke.

I could see the defects of Chinese traditional education: the kids are so bad at speaking. They didn’t have enough chance or encourage to speak. They were afraid of speaking wrongly that their peers would laugh at them. I knew and understood that so clear, because I was one of them three years ago.

I thought I knew what I should do next.

## Oct. 30

I was feeling great today and entered the class with great enthusiasm.

Based on what I discovered yesterday, we tried various methods to help them learn and memorize things. We first let them speak together, and that went smoothly, the voice was load as if everyone was confident. Then I came to them individually when they were filling the map.

“What is this, in Chinese?” I would ask.

Then most of them would answer in Chinese with confidence.

“What about the English?” I kept asking.

Then some of them stayed quiet.

Sometimes I would remind them and let them repeat after me. When they finally managed to spoke, no matter what they said, I would try my best to praise them.

The class seemed to be too short for me. When the bell rang, all the students came up the stage for our signatures. I felt so proud as a teacher, and more encouraged to be a good one.

## Oct. 31

We had five classes today.

I was not in a mood to teach in the morning, probably I didn’t sleep well last night. I felt so sorry about the kids, so I tried my best to cheer up and got much better in the afternoon.

Our group created a song for the kids to remember the seven continents and also help them to speak up. It worked pretty well, and almost all the kids got interested in the afternoon class.

But compared with low-grade ones, the older kids seemed to be shy to sing those songs, probably they thought that was stupid.

I felt the great difference between kids of different grades today, the older kids might tend to be more conservative regardless of their better English skills, and what we need to do is to take different methods for different learning groups.

## Nov. 1

That’s the end of the 5-day-long PW.

We only had two classes.

It was so natural to introduce ourselves in front of so many kids. I could also feel that all my teammates were getting more enthusiastic and confident. We cooperated so well now that we no longer spoke at the same time as what we did at the first day, and everyone had their own work so no one would have nothing to do.

The last two classes finished pretty well.

Some may say that all we did was meaningless.

We didn’t help those kids at all, they hardly learned anything.

But I knew it was not meaningless, because we did our best, and I wish everyone tried their best.

We learned a lot.

We learned how to teach.

We learned how to teach together.

We learned how to give our biggest smiles to the kids while living in such bad conditions.

We learned a completely new world in rural china.

We learned how much we have and how we should cherish it.

We learned what we should do in the future to help more kids like the.

And that is what matters most.