

# CHILD-FRIENDLY, EQUITABLE AND QUALITY BASIC EDUCATION: 6–12 YEARS

## WHAT IS CHILD-FRIENDLY AND EQUITABLE BASIC EDUCATION?

A child-friendly school revolves around the goal of making the basic education experience engaging and stimulating for children aged 6–12 years. The goal also requires schooling to be of good quality and accessible to all children. These principles are the core of the UNICEF child-friendly school education model because they:

- ensure inclusive enrolment and equal treatment of all school-aged children in safe, healthy, protective and positive environments;
- promote learning and the acquisition of knowledge, capacities and attitudes through relevant curriculum and effective teaching and learning; and
- strive for democratic participation of all students, teachers, families and the local society, making the school a harmonious learning community with strong leadership from school managers.



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Though separate elements, all three elements of the UNICEF basic education model are symbiotic: Child-friendly learning is recognized globally as the key to delivering quality education to all children. Child-friendly, equitable and quality basic education helps develop well-rounded children in terms of physical, moral, social-emotional and intellectual well-being.

## KEY ELEMENTS FOR QUALITY BASIC EDUCATION

| INPUT   | PROCESS   | OUTCOME   |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good school infrastructure</li> <li>• Qualified teachers</li> <li>• Stimulating teaching and learning materials</li> <li>• Relevant curriculum</li> <li>• Healthy, well-nourished children</li> <li>• Supportive supervision by the Ministry of Education</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective teaching and learning</li> <li>• Effective school management</li> <li>• Creating a positive, safe, protective and inclusive environment (classroom and school)</li> <li>• Creating positive relationships with and involvement of parents in children’s education</li> <li>• Ongoing teacher professional support</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All children reach or surpass expected teaching and learning achievements</li> <li>• All children have the knowledge, skills and attitudes linked to national goals for education and positive participation in society</li> </ul> |

Children who are enrolled in a good-quality, child-friendly primary school are likely to complete the full schooling cycle, achieve or exceed expected learning outcomes and successfully transition to secondary school.

## CHINA'S INVESTMENT IN BASIC EDUCATION EQUITY AND QUALITY

China has made amazing progress in expanding access to education, with a 99.8% enrolment rate in primary school (2014) and policies that universalize nine years of compulsory basic education.

Challenges remain in reaching the remaining 0.2%, who represent a significant number and are mostly concentrated in poor rural areas of western and central China, not only with access to schools but also schools delivering good-quality education.

### Government commitment to equity and quality in basic education

The Ministry of Education's Education Reform and Development Plan (2010–2020) reflects the Government's commitment to equity, with a focus on rural, left behind, and ethnic minority children and special education to:

- make equal access to a basic state policy, based on equal rights; and
- give preferential resource allocation to rural impoverished remote and border areas and ethnic autonomous areas.

In 2014, the Ministry of Education announced that its policy on *suzhi jiaoyu*, or quality education, is not only about achieving high grades but also about the way that students learn, the environment they learn in and how they apply what they have learned.

### BASIC EDUCATION ACCESS IN CHINA, ACCORDING TO THE NUMBERS

For China's 94.5 million primary school-aged children attending school (2014), approximately:

- 68.9% were registered in rural schools (including townships);
- 11%, or 10.3 million, were ethnic minority children;
- 10%, or 9.6 million, were migrant children from families of migrant workers;
- 15%, or 14.1 million, were children left behind in rural areas by migrant parents; they remained in the care of one parent or other caregivers, such as grandparents; approximately 733,000 of them (aged 6–12) lived alone (based on the 2010 census);
- 10.9%, or 10.2 million, were enrolled in urban and rural boarding schools; and
- 5.6 million teachers taught them in 201,400 primary schools.

Source: Ministry of Education; UNICEF *Children in China: An atlas of social indicators 2014 update*, Beijing, 2014. Available from [www.unicefchina.org/en/index.php?m=content&a=lists&catid=60](http://www.unicefchina.org/en/index.php?m=content&a=lists&catid=60)



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## EDUCATION REFORMS TOUGHER WHERE EDUCATION DISPARITIES REMAIN

Disparities in education quality manifest typically between urban and rural communities and between rich and poor households. Children in disadvantaged groups enrolled in schools, whether affected by migration, ethnic minority status or residence in the most poor and remote areas, tend to receive the poorest quality education. Their schools may lack essential resources that would enable an optimal teaching–learning environment.

Teachers in those areas need additional support to carry out the national education reforms, which call for interactive teaching that leads to improved learning outcomes.

Despite traditional value systems that look favourably upon education, poor-quality learning can 'push' students out of the school system. Other factors also 'pull' students away: poverty and the need to contribute to household income as well as health and psychosocial issues.



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## UNICEF PARTNERING WITH CHINA TO DELIVER CHILD-FRIENDLY, EQUITABLE AND QUALITY BASIC EDUCATION

UNICEF works with the Ministry of Education and partners to help schools with the most disadvantaged children, especially in rural areas, integrate child-friendly policies, standards and curricula.

The Child-Friendly, Equitable and Quality Basic Education Programme contains four components:

1. A model and guidelines for developing a child-friendly school in disadvantaged areas that enables schools to follow the Ministry of Education's management standards. The model covers components 2–4 plus:
  - sports, music, dance and drama
  - boarding schools for children affected by migration
  - climate change and disaster risk reduction education
  - school management
  - special education needs
  - engagement with communities and parents
  - provincial and county Education Commissions' support and supervision
  - education planning and use of statistics.
2. Social and emotional learning and mental health education.
3. Professional support for teachers and effective teaching and learning.
4. Water, sanitation and hygiene in schools (see separate briefing note).

### Where UNICEF works in China on basic education projects



- Teacher support and effective teaching and learning
- Child Friendly Schools and Social and emotional learning
- Boarding School standards tested
- Teacher Support and effective teaching and learning/boarding school standards tested
- Social and emotional learning

### Component 1. A model and guidelines for schools on implementing child-friendly education

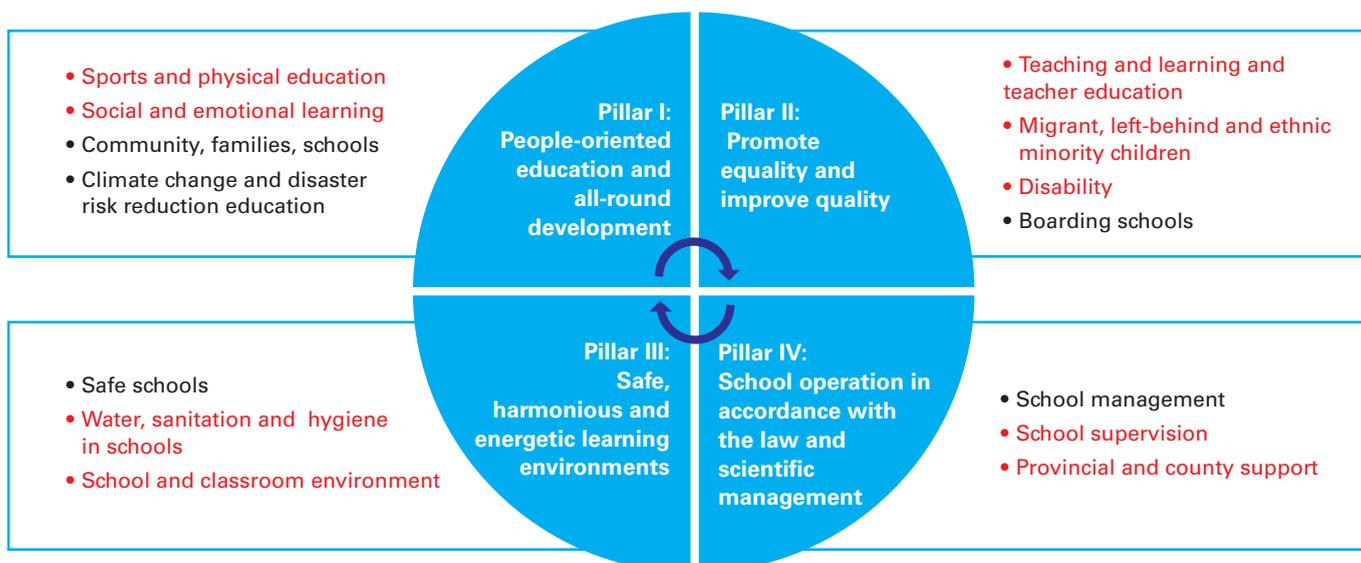
Using our 'muddy boots' approach of testing practices and concepts in specific areas that ideally will lead to national application, UNICEF since 2001 has worked with the Ministry of Education on developing child-friendly schools in China.

Achievements to date:

- Based on evidence that emerged from the pilot sites, the Ministry of Education in 2009 **issued standards for child-friendly schools** to be applied universally across the country.
- In 2013, those standards were transformed into the **Child-Friendly School Management Standards** for the nine years of compulsory basic education.



## UNICEF's Programmes and The Ministry of Education's Child-Friendly School Management Standards



**Note:** Red text refers to programmes that have been or are being tested (piloted). Black text refers to the focus areas in the UNICEF Country Programme 2016–2020.

### Future plans:

- UNICEF will continue its work with the Ministry of Education in areas in red text and begin working on areas in black text, all of which will inform the devising of a **costed model of a child-friendly school** and guidelines that enable administrators in disadvantaged areas to successfully implement the four pillars of the Ministry's national Child-Friendly School Management Standards. The model will include the guidelines and teacher training and teaching and learning materials available to any school or teacher through the Ministry's cloud-based educational platform. UNICEF will also complete an ongoing evaluation study over the five-year programme cycle to demonstrate the link between child-friendly schools and improved learning outcomes.
- UNICEF and the Ministry of Education will work on developing **supervision standards, standards for rural boarding school principals and school supervision and modernization indicators**, which will encompass child-friendly school standards.

### Component 2. Children's social and emotional learning and mental health development

In 2011, UNICEF began working with the Ministry of Education and Beijing Normal University on the social and emotional learning (SEL) component of child-friendly schools. The five primary elements of social and emotional learning – self-awareness, managing feelings, motivation, empathy and social-skills – are included in the Ministry's 2012 Mental Health Education Guidelines.

UNICEF and the Ministry of Education have targeted 2017 for reaching 100,000 primary school children in 250 pilot schools in poor communities with social and emotional learning (including teacher training). The lessons from that experience will be the basis for a comprehensive model of social and emotional learning and mental health education that can be rolled out to other schools in the pilot counties and provinces by 2020 and aim to then inform the Government's education policy and practice.

### Achievements to date:

- **Expertise of China's SEL experts team developed** with ongoing capacity strengthening by international experts.
- **A self-review instrument and teaching and learning materials developed.**
- **Training of local trainers and school leaders** on children's rights, concepts and approaches of child-friendly schools and social and emotional learning.
- **Essential equipment provided** to improve school and learning environments for children.



- **Teachers in the 250 pilot schools in five disadvantaged counties trained** in 2014 on the SEL curriculum, which they began piloting in classrooms.
- **A SEL conference organized** in 2014 in China to share experiences and learn about programmes from international SEL experts.

Future plans:

- **Finalizing simplified tips for teaching SEL in all classes**, with tips for principals and SEL for children left behind by migrant parents.
- Developing additional resources, including a **digital application for parents or caregivers of children affected by migration** on developing their children's social and emotional learning.
- **Training and ongoing support for teachers and principals.**



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### Component 3. Professional support for teachers and effective teaching and learning

To improve classroom teaching and learning, UNICEF works with the Ministry of Education to create a learner-centred, participatory learning environment that sparks creativity, encourages a love of inquiry and helps the most vulnerable children in China pursue their learning excellence.

Achievements to date:

- An **on-site teacher training and support system** through resource teachers has been piloted by UNICEF and the Ministry of Education since 2007, including the introduction in 2009 of a mobile educational training and resource unit in earthquake-affected areas, which the Ministry will further develop. The model involves resource teachers travelling to schools, observing teachers to identify their strengths and weaknesses and helping them improve through training courses. Influenced by this model, the Government published the Plan for Supporting Village School Teachers (2015–2020), with building up teachers' capabilities through a continuous support system designated as a fundamental strategy.
- Creating **teacher guidelines on inquiry-based learning for teaching Chinese, math and science** and developing online training programmes and videos. Teachers have responded positively to watching stronger teachers implementing new methods. Since 2010, a UNICEF-supported project has helped more than 10,500 Chinese, math and science teachers in grades 3–5 improve their teaching skills. The project introduced materials for individual and group learning games for inside and outside the classroom that reinforces the application of difficult concepts and the idea that 'learning is fun'.



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### A BOTTLE OF SODA SPARKS UNDERSTANDING OF SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING AMONG RURAL CHILDREN

**Zhong County, Chongqing Province:** A bottle of fizzy cola in hand, Julie Casey, senior director of SEAL consultancy in the United Kingdom, started her social and emotional learning demonstration with a story. "I woke up terribly late this morning because of the jet lag." She shook the soda bottle. "I feel extremely nervous because this is my first lesson in China," she continued, shaking the bottle really hard. "Tell me what will happen if I open this soda bottle?"

"It will explode!" the children screamed when Julie started to twist the cap. "That's right. It's okay if we feel sad or angry. But if we let our negative feelings and emotions build up, it will eventually explode like this soda. So we need to understand our feelings and learn how to manage them."

See the full blog by Fu Ning, UNICEF China research assistant, at <http://www.unicef.cn/en/index.php?c=index&a=show&catid=51&id=4223>

- A set of **training resources for physical education teachers in primary and junior secondary schools** to improve teachers' skills and the role of play, physical education classes and sport in rural child-friendly schools. The model includes demonstration of good sports facilities and equipment and promoting organized sport activities in schools. As of 2015, 1,050 physical education teachers from 342 rural primary and secondary schools in eight provinces had attended national and county training workshops on the resource package.

Future plans:

- Refining the **on-site teacher professional support system with a focus on improving teaching and learning**, and continuing to demonstrate **innovative teaching and learning and teacher training models to inform national professional standards** for teachers and training programmes and implementation of the National Educational Informatization Plan 2011–2020. The plan aims to narrow the digital divide between rural and urban schools, make resource teaching and learning materials available online, especially to schools in disadvantaged rural areas, and to enable teachers to use technology to facilitate changes in their rote teaching and learning practices. The UNICEF programme will work with the National Center for Education Technology to develop the digital training materials, including video programmes on generic teaching skills and best practices, and a mobile teaching tips application. The mobile resource teacher model will be further refined.

## UNICEF ADVOCATING FOR EDUCATION GLOBALLY AND SOUTH-SOUTH PROGRAMMES

UNICEF will continue working with partners in China on ensuring education is a central pillar of the post-2015 development agenda and promoting more child-friendly school environments to improve conditions and make schools and learning more appealing for children. UNICEF will also share the many good practices from China's disadvantaged schools with schools in developing countries in Asia and Africa.



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### GAMES FOR LEARNING IN THE CLASSROOM

Games for students and teachers to understand and explain key concepts in Chinese, math and science have transformed classroom learning activities. Through Ministry of Education and UNICEF collaboration, 22 games are being developed to help students and teachers grasp potentially challenging concepts and to apply them to real-life situations, such as fractions, percentages, measuring areas and word building. To date, kits that include 14 games have gone out to all schools in the child-friendly school project in five western region provinces, reaching more than 68,000 primary school students in grades 3–5 and more than 10,000 teachers (see <http://cdepen.eduyun.cn/tmgnyj/1687.jhtml>). The remaining eight games and support activities will be finalized in 2015.

**“Social and emotional learning is the process through which children and young people... acquire knowledge, attitudes and skills to recognise and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, demonstrate care and concern for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, make responsible decisions, and handle interpersonal situations effectively.”**

Durlak et al., The Impact of Enhancing Students' Social and Emotional Learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions, *Child Development*, 2011.



**About UNICEF:** UNICEF promotes the rights and well-being of every child, in everything we do. Together with our partners, we work in 190 countries and territories to translate that commitment into practical action, focusing special effort on reaching the most vulnerable and excluded children, to the benefit of all children, everywhere. For more information about UNICEF and its work visit: [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org)

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