

Diverse Programs Enrich Students' After-School Time

By Dong Na

Chinese authorities have introduced a set of guidelines to ease the burden of excessive homework and off-campus tutoring for students in compulsory education (grade 1 to 9). Recently, the school hours of primary and secondary school students in Ningbo have increased, as have school-based after-hours programs. Providing students with a rich and varied curriculum during this increased time requires a concerted effort from schools, families, and society.

Volunteers Deliver STEM Lectures

Over the past two weeks, since the start of the school year, more than 3,000 registered volunteers have been organizing programs in primary and secondary schools.

Recently, a team of volunteer instructors from the Ningbo Institute of Materials Technology and Engineering, Chinese Academy of Sciences (NIMTE) hosted a lecture at a school in Zhenhai District, where engineer Zhang Haiqing unveiled the mystery of 3D printing. After an explanation of the principle of 3D printers and hands-on creation of 3D printed parts, the students gained a lot of new scientific knowledge.

"Today's lesson was very interesting. The teacher brought a 3D printer, and it was so much fun to print things out," one student said happily.

In the future, the NIMTE team will continue to organize extra-curricular activities in coding, Lego education, model building, robotics, drones, natural sciences, and other STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) subjects relevant to the institute's and the researchers' own fields of expertise.

"To make it easier for elementary school students to understand the content, I carefully prepared my lessons in advance. This semester, I will also talk



Primary school students in Yinzhou District participating in after-school activities.

[Photo by Yan Long]

about drones and underwater ROVs to cultivate their interest in science from a young age," Zhang said.

Another school in Ningbo now schedules cooking classes every Thursday afternoon, inviting parents to teach the students culinary skills. The class is very popular with students, many of whom expressed a willingness to keep a journal of their learning progress.

'Unconditional Rest Time Vouchers' Grant Teachers Time Off

As elementary schools roll out more after-school programs and junior high schools open up their classrooms for evening and weekend study hall, teachers' working hours have inevitably become longer. To reduce teachers' workload and stress, a pilot school in Zhenhai District is issuing "unconditional rest

time vouchers".

To get a half-day break, teachers only need to submit the voucher with a form stating their name, department, planned time off, and other basic information.

Each month, the school issues two "unconditional rest time vouchers" to each junior high teacher and one to each elementary teacher. The process is relatively simple: after getting the administration's approval, teachers can freely switch classes among themselves or request the administration to coordinate the scheduling.

Many teachers welcome the "unconditional rest time vouchers". "If there is a family emergency or if you are tired, it's good to have half a day off," one teacher said.

In the school principal's view, giving teachers time off will help them be more focused and efficient in the classroom,

which in turn benefits student growth.

Youth Palace Quality Programs in Great Demand

On weekends, Ningbo Youth Palace is crowded with children attending extracurricular programs and their accompanying parents.

"My child likes painting and public speaking. Now that he doesn't have to go to extra academic classes over the weekends, he has more time to participate in activities that interest him," a parent said.

Recently, the Youth Palace opened many new extracurricular programs and camps in arts and sports, which are very popular.

Many children are eager to sign up for programs at the "Junior Academy of Science", a creative space of the Ningbo Youth Palace. Elementary school

student Guo Guo has a strong interest in engineering and electrical circuits. He can put together all kinds of devices under the guidance of teachers; at home, he even has his own "creative workbench" where he works independently.

Meanwhile, the Ningbo Cultural Study Camp organizes trips for kids to visit key cultural monuments around the city and experience traditional local crafts, increasing their knowledge and understanding of Ningbo culture while enhancing their independence and teamwork skills.

To address the shortage of after-school education in rural areas, the Youth Palace also works with rural schools to bring more programs to students there, so that they could have access to an equally-diverse range of activities as urban children.

SPOTLIGHT

Forum Highlights China-CEEC Talent Cooperation

By Jin Lu

Recently, the inaugural China-CEEC Forum for Young Science & Technology Talents was held in Ningbo, attracting young scholars and experts from Central and Eastern European countries (CEECs) such as Serbia, Croatia, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia.

Via the online platform, the speakers shared ideas on the theme "innovative youth share the future" and exchanged opinions about China-CEEC talent cooperation.

Marina Sokovic, assistant minister of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia, attended the forum via a video link.

Sokovic said that research organs from Serbia and China had achieved remarkable accomplishments in recent years; she expressed the hope that the two countries would continue to strengthen cooperation in science and technology innovation and bolster the high-quality economic development of the two countries.

Professor Dame Dimitrovska of the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Skopje, North Macedonia, pointed out that the COVID-19 epidemic had crossed geographical barriers and spread quickly to all parts of the world. The world today urgently needs the rapid dissemination of scientific information. The responses of the scientific community and society to the virus outbreak highlight the need to create a cohesive vision of cooperation and shared values to ensure that no one is left behind.

In the wake of the 2nd China-CEEC Expo, Ningbo has witnessed a series of positive outcomes. A total of 12 multilateral activities aimed at promoting trade collaboration were launched during the Expo; 97 two-way investment programs worth \$18.21 billion in total were signed. In addition, letters of procurement intent signed at the Expo represent a combined investment of 10.78 billion yuan (\$1.62 billion).

According to *A Research of the Local Cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European Countries (2020)*, published by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Ningbo ranked first for two consecutive years in the comprehensive performance index of China-CEEC cooperation, followed by Tianjin, Xiamen, Beijing and Shanghai.

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双语汇 Different Tongues

前童古镇：古宅集萃，韵味悠长

By Gou Wen

Qiantong ancient town is located in the southwest of Ninghai County. With the Bai Creek flowing through it, the town is a unique collection of historical architecture that epitomizes the quintessential southern China water town.

宁海县西南方向有一座古镇，白溪的水从这里流过，精美的古建筑让人目不暇接——这里就是前童古镇。

Qiantong was founded at the end of the Song Dynasty, over seven hundred years ago. More than 1,300 historical dwellings of various styles have been preserved to the present day. The town's winding paths are paved with pebble. The walls of homes are inlaid with elaborately carved stone windows.

前童古镇始建于宋末，至今仍保

存有1300多间各式古建民居。镇里的小路铺的是鹅卵石，墙面嵌着雕花的石窗。

The 2,000 families who live in the town have the same family name: Tong, making Qiantong the largest community of Tong-surnamed people in the Jiangnan area.

住在这里的2000户人家大多都有着同样的姓氏——童，因此这里也是江南最大的童姓聚居地。

During Chinese New Year, many tourists come to Qiantong to experience an authentic local festive atmosphere. Locals would perform the Dragon and Lion Dance on the streets, festooned with colorful lanterns. Bustling with crowds, this old town truly comes to life during the holiday season.

新年期间，许多游人会来这里感受“老底子”的年味，观赏各式花灯以及舞龙舞狮表演。那时，这座千年古镇里会变得游人如织，热闹非凡。



Qiantong ancient town. /前童古镇。

[Photo by Miu Jun] 缪军 摄

