

School Visits 2001

A. Danfeng, ShaanXi (near Xian)

Danfeng is approximately 150 km east of Xian. It has a population of nearly 300,000. We visited a number of elementary, middle and high schools.

The major candidate for our library is the Danfeng High school. This is primarily a senior high school with few middle school classes and is the major high school in the area. It is well managed with science, computer and language labs. The library needs work, both in terms of increasing their collection and in management.

Advantage: Very committed local ministry of education who has very strong desire to cooperative with us.

Disadvantage: More interested in increasing library collection and buying computer hardware. Perhaps most interested in getting funds to build schools. It may take quite a bit of effort to do training both for librarians and teachers. Location wise, it is difficult to get to from Xian as the roads are sometimes blocked.

B. Xining, QingHai

We visited 3 schools near Xining area. The first is a school that clearly has needs, but does not seem to be in a position to digest the type of library we have in mind. The second school is a minority school and is very far from ready.

The one serious candidate is a school that has all levels from elementary classes to middle school classes to senior high classes. It used to be a factory school, move from the northeast part of China. This school has the best library of all the schools we saw. It seems to be well managed with a smart principal. The math class we attended was excellent with very high standards of teaching.

Advantage: school is well managed, and the principal seems to understand what we want. It is less than an hour from Xining. So, location wise, it is convenient.

Disadvantage: Qinghai seems to be politically conservative and we need to be careful.

C. GanSu

There are 3 schools in GanSu that we visited, all in very poor areas and all are candidates.

The first school was iii TienZhu. This is a fairly new town (move from another location 13 or so years ago). So the school is fairly new. 42% of the student body composed of those from minority races. The mayor is smart. This is a desert area with a serious water problem. They (students and teachers) have to plant trees each Spring.

Advantage: new place, smart mayor in a small scaled town.

Disadvantage: long ways from LanZhou - 3 hours.

The Second school was in Tung Wei. Although poor, this place has a long tradition of turning out scholars and boast of a number of well know calligraphers. The principal is very smart, but this school has the most serious problems. It has a student body of over 3000. (Next year they will spin off the middle school, keeping only the senior high and the student body is expected to go down to 2400--still very large). They do not have dormitories and the other facilities are not nearly adequate for the number of students they have. This is the school with the most need.

Advantage: smart principal and great need. Perhaps our task can be better defined, as we will address only senior high school students.

Disadvantage: long ways from LanZhou - 3 to 4 hours.

The Third school was in Hui Ling. Another very poor town. This school is in a very rural area and 92% of its students come from farming families. The principal seems to be fairly conservative, but there were young forward looking vice principal.

Advantage: Decent overall conditions.

Disadvantage: long ways from LanZhou - 3 to 4 hours.