

[The following reflection essays were written by students attending the nonprofit “YingHua in Beijing” 2011 Summer Language & Leadership Institute. Almost every day, the students would sit in a circle to reflect on the day’s experience through writing and sharing. On the last Saturday before they went home, they were asked to reflect on their 4-week experience and what they would tell other kids about it. They had 20 minutes. All 22 students shared their experiences here. More information, such as the institute’s daily announcements and schedule, can be found at [www.yinghuasummer.org](http://www.yinghuasummer.org) . Contact: Dr. Bonnie Liao [bonnieliao@yinghua.org](mailto:bonnieliao@yinghua.org) (609.530.0399). Please feel free to share this document with your friends.]

## **Amy, 13**

I learned and experienced a lot these past four weeks at YingHua in Beijing. The leadership classes, activities and field trips were all unique. In leadership, I learned about myself, and how I can be a leader and help others. The cultural activities, such as calligraphy and mask-painting, were all fun to try to learn to do. The field trips were the highlights of the trip. We explored the city of Beijing and learned about the past. YingHua has been a great experience for me.

This camp has definitely changed me. After visiting the Guang Ai School, I realized all the great opportunities I have and how lucky I am. For example, some kids at the school have been in Beijing their whole lives and never visited the Great Wall or eaten Beijing Peking Duck! It made me grateful for everything I have. I’ve also learned about myself. Some things I never knew I learned here. This being away from home experience really taught me responsibility. I feel the same, but inside I know I am a little different.

I really enjoyed my stay here, and recommend this camp. It gave me so much. Leadership, language, culture, and so much more is included in these four weeks. I’ve also met friends from different places. All the teachers are amazing and put so much effort into making these four weeks the best they can be. This program is amazing. The four weeks may seem like a long time to be away from home, but they pass so fast. I’ll miss this camp and all the people so much, but I can’t wait to see my family. The length and schedule of the camp is perfect. I got a lot out of my stay here.

## **Annie, 11**

The past few weeks have gone by so fast! I guess time flies when you’re having fun. I’ve made so many friends, learned so many things, and enjoyed every moment.

At this camp, I’ve become less picky, learned more manners, and learned how to be a leader. I know my mom will be so surprised at what I’ve learned and at my improved Mandarin.

If you want to become a better person, not take things for granted, and go to great sites in Beijing, I suggest you go to the YingHua Summer Program. The teachers are very helpful and caring. YingHua changed me, thank you!

## **Ben, 15**

This camp has been a wonderful experience for me. Seeing the beautiful city of Beijing with such amazing people has changed my life. The field trips were fun, the classes were enriching, and the last week was eye-opening. Meeting the students of the Guang Ai School really changed my perspective on China and the rest of the world. After hearing the heart-wrenching stories of some of the orphans, it amazed me that we could still somehow make them smile.

This camp taught me to be more caring, and it really helped me to realize the importance of empathy. I learned to appreciate my wonderful life as I never have before. I now realize that compared to some of the students, I have seemingly unlimited opportunities in life.

If anyone is trying to decide to go to this camp, I strongly urge them to attend. The camp not only provides fun and education, but it goes deeper and it can completely change your view on life. Like I said, we have seemingly unlimited opportunities in life compared to many in this world, so I urge everyone to seize the chance and come to YingHua.

## Brandon, 9

I can't believe today is the last day of this camp. I liked all the places that we went throughout this camp. The most risk-taking place I liked is probably the Great Wall. I think it is risk-taking because you have to climb a lot and there is a risk that you might fall. I think the most caring and inquisitive place was Guang Ai School because they care for us by making us feel like home and we care for them by keeping them company. Also they were really inquisitive by asking all the things they can think of. We are really inquisitive also because we asked them a lot of questions.

Throughout this camp, I improved on many of the ten elements leaders do. I think I improved on risk-taking because instead of lagging behind and saying "this is boring", I try to keep up with the front. I also think I improved on [being] inquisitive because when I came here I didn't ask a lot of questions but now I ask questions about anything I'm not sure of.

I think this camp would be a great experience for kids 16 and younger because these kids probably are more inquisitive than 20-year-olds because they already know a lot of things from the start about what we are going to learn from this camp.

## Chauncey, 12

YingHua in Beijing was a very illuminating experience. I learned a lot of both IQ and EQ groups. This camp is more than a camp, rather a chance to experience the beginning of one's discovery of how to enjoy life to its fullest. YiB was a very fun and exciting way to learn to interact with others, while absorbing an entirely different culture.

At the beginning of this camp, I was a practically normal person. In the end, I feel like I have come a long way. I have come to appreciate an entirely new culture and my understanding of the platinum rule\* has increased. I have learned many things about what we take for granted and how we can improve our living style. YiB was a chance to learn about and how to appreciate our approach to life.

(\* the "Platinum Rule" – Treat others the way *THEY* want to be treated.)

If you're uncertain, YINGHUA IN BEIJING is:

Youth-Enriching  
Immersion, a  
Natural  
Growth in  
Heart, an  
Unforgettable,  
Asian,  
Illuminating,  
New,  
Brain-Developing  
Experience, and an  
Inexplicable  
Jumpstart to  
Intaking  
Numerous  
Gains.

P.S: It's an acronym.

## **Darren, 11**

The past few weeks were the best camp experience in my life so far. Things were a lot different than the first year I came. I felt that the trips were a lot more organized because we have a travel agency. I thought it would be the same thing as three years ago but you can't judge things by the past.

I thought that this program has helped me improve on many things. The most important is my Chinese because ever since I left this program, my Chinese was all forgotten, but now that I've come back, it gave me the highest scores in my class. The other thing this camp has taught me is leadership. In leadership class we learned that we should be ambitious and I think I should be ambitious in learning because if you work hard you'll be successful and that circle of influence will expand inside of you making you think that "learning is important to me".

What people should understand about this camp is that not only that it is teaching you Chinese but is helping you to become a better person. And once you come back from this camp, not only have you learned Chinese but you have learned to become ambitious in learning and I'm sure that when school starts, I will do my best in learning to be successful.

## **Dave, 14**

The first day I came here, I was unsure of being here. I never wanted to come but my parents said that it would be a great experience. I knew they were right. But over the past few weeks, I have gotten to know everyone at this camp pretty well. Their attitudes were great but some had some bad faults. I'm not saying that the whole trip was easy, no, there were some negatives that happened in between. But as soon as we got over all of the issues, it was fun. The field trips were great, the exercise was a great workout, and the classes flowed by quickly.

When I came here, I was a guy who barely talked to anyone, who took everything he had for granted. But after seeing the people here and their living conditions, and after talking to all of the other students within the program, I realize that I should be grateful for everything I have. I met a bunch of orphans who had nothing, and hearing about their pasts and to also hear about how they enjoy everything they had made me feel that I don't deserve everything I have. Talking to all of the other students made me realize that being shy is nothing to fear. So after this entire trip, I think that I should not fear shyness, and to be thankful for everything I get and receive.

## **Detorea, 11**

At this camp, I enjoyed a lot of things. I really loved the field trips. I thought all of them were really, really interesting. I learned a lot from most of them. I had a great time talking to my roommates and other kids at this camp. I noticed that a lot of people from this camp are funny.

What I think I improved in was being shy and communicating. In the way beginning, I was shy and did not talk as much. Now in the middle and end of camp I talk WAY too much!

What I think that people should be knowing from this camp is that it's fun, and you could meet new friends easily and you can learn a lot from it. If you are not sure about coming to YingHua Summer Program, you better think again. Another thing that they need to know about this camp is that you can communicate a lot! Also, they need to know how to be patient if they need help with Chinese. That is what I needed to do when we first had class here at the Yong An Hotel. The teachers can't put their brain all on one main person. So that is what I think kids should know.

## **James, 14**

I started camp uneasy but was warmly greeted by Matt and Dave, my roommates. I slowly grew comfortable and more settled. In this camp I enjoyed the classes, trips, but mostly the new friends. Most of them were really nice and helped me grow as a person. In this camp I learned a lot of things – more about Chinese culture, Chinese language, and leadership.

In the Guang Ai School, I learned to be responsible and teach kids new things. I think this school taught me the most. I was touched by the kids' stories and was amazed at the kids' manners. The Chinese classes taught me lots of new words. Even though I didn't memorize all of them, I found myself recognizing lots of characters on the streets. The field trips helped me learn about China's culture and history. I learned how much China has grown. I definitely grew as a person. I feel like I shouldn't take anything for granted. I also grew to care for the young kids at Guang Ai. I could imagine what it would feel like to be dumped on the streets. I feel more responsible in leading and managing money.

This camp teaches you more than you would think. It will open your eyes to leadership, Chinese culture and more. This was one of the most fun, learning-filled four weeks of my life. I hope I get to come next year.

## **Jessica, 13**

I believe the people and not the setting define an experience – no matter how well-prepared or enlightening any event is, it is the people who make something memorable. In this light, YingHua is different in anyone's perspective. It has had its share of bullies and drama, as well as kind acts and friendships. Overall, however, there is a steady upward trend as the days and weeks pass. This is not the most impressive of statements, but it is indeed a daunting task to complete. The people in this camp have shares of both positives and negatives, but it is which side they express that makes everything so much better or worse. In my opinion, the teachers at YingHua have done their best to bring out the best in each and every person – there have been failures, but the majority has been a success.

I have found myself improving over the course of this camp, mostly because of the people with and around us. Thanks to the effort of Liao Laoshi in particular, I am now much more aware of the lives and troubles of the people around me. More importantly, I have learned to appreciate. From the people who serve us at the restaurants to the students at Guang Ai, I now see all the people, instead of only some, as people, with lives and thoughts outside of mine. This lesson is one that is greatly important in future life. It may be learned anywhere, but YingHua and Liao Laoshi create one of the best atmospheres for it. I have improved and "deproved", in many aspects, but this is a vast improvement.

As for what I would say to potential future attendees, well... it is still your choice, affected by everything in your own life. However, if you think you have the capacity to enjoy and embrace new experiences and endless learning, go for it.

## **Joanne, 11**

My overall impression is how this camp encourages you to do something that you wouldn't have done if not for coming to this camp. For instance, on two of the field trips to the Great Wall, you must have a lot of energy to climb it. Another thing I like about this camp is how the teachers treat you. I find that every teacher at this camp is very kind.

This summer program also changed the way I usually do things. I used to feel unspoiled and always wasted food. But after visiting the Guang Ai School, I feel very spoiled and we have everything when they have almost nothing. I think we have a much easier life than them because they used to live in the streets before going to Guang Ai School,

For the people who are unsure about this camp, I suggest that they come, because I think this is a great camp for learning new things and doing things that would have never been done without this camp. This would be the perfect camp for people who want to learn Mandarin, leadership, and visit famous places in and near Beijing.

## **Lin-Lin, 13**

2011's YingHua in Beijing Summer Program is almost over, and I seriously can't believe it. I swear it was just a week ago when I first arrived at the YongAn Hotel. This camp has been such a

meaningful experience for me, and I am so upset that the four weeks are over. Through all the past field trips, classes, meals, and freetime, I have never stopped learning new things about others, leadership, China's history, etc. I am going to fly back home a lot smarter than when I flew here, thanks to this magnificent program. I had so much fun here, it is too great to be described in words. I wish I could stay at this program forever!

Although this was my second year at YingHua, I still learned tons of new information about how to be a better person and how to lead a better life. I feel I have become a much wiser person, but there is one thing I am especially careful about. I've learned to be a lot more grateful for everything. Last week, we spent a lot of time with some kids that had a difficult past. Seeing their happy, hopeful faces cover up their scars and bad past really makes me feel touched. They were so thankful to live in dirty dorms, eat in a room full of flies, and learn in a plain, hot classroom (which isn't plain anymore after we decorated it!) because all of it was better than what they had before. Spending time with them really made me think about myself, when I complain about five minutes of no air conditioning, or whine about a small room. Seeing the orphans' living conditions really changed my thoughts. Once we returned to the nice YongAn Hotel, I was sure to be thankful for EVERYTHING and to not complain about things as much.

Because I loved this camp so much last year, I returned this year, accompanied by three other friends. This year, Liao Laoshi did not fail to make camp amazingly fun again. I would definitely recommend kids of ALL ages to take part in this camp, because it is a great learning opportunity for everyone. I want to thank Liao Laoshi for running this camp, because it is such an excellent experience!

## **Lisa, 13**

I had an amazing time at YingHua Summer Program. Coming for the first time, I was ready to try new things. YingHua isn't a normal camp where we stay in the woods and camp around a bonfire. YingHua is a unique camp where kids learn about culture and language while having tons of fun. This camp was an opportunity of a lifetime and even if I will go many more times in the future, it will never be boring or old to me. Each day is full of new and exciting-filled opportunities, from sitting in class learning Chinese words to climbing the Great Wall.

Throughout this program, I have changed my outlook on things drastically. But what I think is that during our trip to the Guang Ai School (fourth week), I changed the most. I realized that many of these kids were just rejected and thrown on the street by their parents, while I live a good life with loving parents. The kids truly inspired me to not take things for granted, do not waste, and to never give up. All these kids have amazing talent and still which one day will be shared with the world. Besides the Guang Ai School, I have learned many leadership skills such as being knowledgeable, principled, caring, balanced, reflective, inquisitive, open-minded, risk taking, thinker, and communicator. I have learned how to use them and when to use them. Throughout this camp I practiced them and I will use them in the future.

Sure, you have three hours of class for many days. Even though that may sound like a lot, it isn't! Time passes so quickly that you WISH you had more class. Also, visiting all the Chinese landmarks is so exciting! This camp is a chance of a lifetime that you can't miss out on.

## **Matt, 13**

Overall, I think that camp was a positive experience for me. I enjoyed learning in the classrooms through language lessons and on field trips to historic and important places in Beijing. I think the choice of restaurants this year displays the deliciousness of Chinese food. I also think that going to visit the Guang Ai School during the last week of camp was a great way to apply what we learned in the first three weeks to real situations.

This camp has changed me in many ways. It has truly opened my eyes to see that we take many things for granted. Instead of reading and hearing about it, we were able to see it, but even better, experience it. This camp has also changed my study habits as we had dictation every class as well as

other homework to prepare. Lastly, seeing people (mostly the elderly) every day in the park doing some form of exercise has changed the way I see the necessity of exercise. Before, I saw exercise as the way to becoming a stronger athlete (I am a cross country runner). After camp, I see it as the way to preserve and keep your body fit and healthy for many years to come.

I would definitely recommend this program. If you are like me, you have never been to Beijing or even China, you have been hoping to visit many important places, some thousands of years old for a long time, and you have been looking for an opportunity to truly apply your Chinese and improve or learn more Chinese, then this camp is for you.

## Melissa, 14

Today is the last night to reflect on my whole experience here. I remember my first reflection, when all I talked about was missing home and getting excited. Now all of a sudden after four weeks, I feel like a whole different person. In general, I feel like this camp was so much more than just a lesson in the Chinese language. It felt like a whole teaching in life. I learned so many things, in and out of class. I've started to really think things through. Like today on the bullet train, I saw so many poor communities and I thought to myself: if China can build a bullet train, how come there are still so many people living lives like those? However, this camp was more than lessons; I had so much fun, it didn't feel like I was sitting and learning.

In the four weeks here, I learned a lot about myself. I discovered new aspects of myself and began to comprehend my flaws. The biggest week though was the last one at 光爱. I became a leader, something I used to always be afraid of. I learned what it takes to be a leader and the feeling of influencing others. I became a much more of a risk-taker here, one of the biggest risks being me joining the leadership group. I've learned to be ambitious and try new things, even if they will not end successfully. I've also grown to accept things in life and understand things like emotions. This camp has given me the feeling as if I have really matured. I understand things in life that I didn't even know about until now.

In the end, this camp was the right decision. I was so reluctant at first to come, expecting a boring session full of classes and homework. Instead I've experienced this camp full of life-lessons and eye-opening teachings. I feel like I'm going to go back home with a whole new perspective on life. Although it sounds really far-stretched and fake, I really believe that this camp was an amazing journey that I will probably never forget.

## Ming-Ming, 15

Indescribable. The past four weeks have been an incredible experience that no words can explain. This program has more than I could ever imagine. Every single day was packed with new information and unforgettable memories. All the staff members here are loving and absolutely perfect for their jobs. The whole entire program is well-organized and balanced. I don't think I would change a single detail about this program.

With every adventure that I've experienced and learned, it's hard to believe only four weeks have passed. Personally, I do not feel that different or think I have changed that much, but I know I have. I approach situations with an open mind and accept my challenges without complaint. I have developed the essential skill of time management, and have exercised other key traits such as responsibility, caring for others, and reflecting upon myself. Another thing that no one was taught but I think everyone realized is: learning can be fun.

Will I be returning to this program next year? Maybe. Will I remember these memories for the rest of my entire life? Absolutely! YingHua is an experience I don't think anyone can forget. It changes who you are, and how you look at life. This is an opportunity that everyone should take on. YingHua really is a program that you don't want to miss. What's the worst that could happen? Just go for it!

## Ryan, 15

So now it's all over. It's been pretty hard to put all of the past four weeks into writing. This camp has been an amazing experience. I had never been to China before this, and I knew next to nothing about its language and culture. I have to admit, it's pretty different from America. In my first reflection I promised myself I would excel at using chopsticks by the last day. That hasn't really worked out.

As far as the language learning portion of the camp goes, I think it really makes a difference when you're forced to put the words you learn into action every day. While it is still difficult for me to understand very much Chinese at all, I came here knowing nothing. So I guess I have learned a good bit. The leadership skills we learn in this camp also may make a difference in the way we think and act. While some things I had already known, other ideas I never really thought about. We rated ourselves in our qualities every week or so, maybe more, and I found myself improving in some ways (maybe I was just feeling nicer those days though). Other times I lowered my ratings for some qualities. It was an interesting thing to do.

On the fourth week, we went out to the countryside to see the Guang Ai School, for children without parents, who were either dead or from parents simply couldn't take care of their kids anymore. The kids were all great, but one boy even became kind of like a little brother there. We all picked buddies from the first and second grade classes on the first day, and my buddy came up to me for the rest of the week. Even though we had trouble communicating with words, he would smile or stick his tongue out at me when he saw me. Once he showed me the bugs he had caught. It was somewhat painful to see how poor such great kids were, but without the school they would have nothing at all. It's really the people here that make the camp, though. I feel like we're kind of a family, especially with my roommates. It makes me sad to think that most of these people I don't know when I'll see again, if I ever do.

Overall, this camp has made a difference in me, I think, even if I can't really pinpoint how. I'm feeling a little homesick now, but I know I'm going to miss this camp when it's gone. Goodbye.

## Shannon, 15

The main thing that I truly love about this camp is the process one goes through to build relationships with others. Along the way, we are also taught valuable lessons about leadership, Chinese language, and Chinese culture. However, every day spent at YingHua opens up another learning arena for social explorers and yet-to-be-formed memories. All of the leadership skills learned are used in our everyday struggles, strengthening the new knowledge and skills that we learned.

I have been to this camp multiple times, and the reason why I never get bored is the people who come here every year. We may visit the same places, but making unforgettable friends never gets old. I still keep in touch with my camp friends from years before. At YingHua, we learn about independence and caring for others; many unknown things about others are revealed through these lessons. The relationships are priceless because living in a new country for a month with the same group of kids brings us together.

What's also amazing is that there is so much positive peer pressure happening in every activity we do; friends are more eager to try new foods and take more risks if they are together, because we trust each other so much. If one person steps up and pushes his buddies to do so as well, more people will be willing to go that extra mile and experience things. We study for dictation tests together and encourage each other when writing essays or reading texts, and I see everyone doing that by the end of camp.

I absolutely love all of the friends I make because we learn about each other's mistakes in these few weeks, but at the same time, we also learn to forgive, making us much more understanding of each other. By the end, everyone is so close that we can joke around like we are all old friends.

I think this year of camp has made me a much better leader in general. As a veteran of the YiB program, a lot of people come to me for answers and information, which I am now ready to provide, as

one of the older students at camp. I have learned to communicate better with both adults and peers, and I have developed a more growth mindset because of this camp. Since I speak both Mandarin and English fluently, I am usually the translator for most people, being put in a very public position. I have learned to use this position wisely to teach others and gain more respect. I am much more of a risk taker but am also more principled now because I need to be a good role model for others.

I highly recommend anyone to come to this camp, especially kids who want to become better leaders and/or make long-lasting friendships. If anyone doubts their interest in YingHua, I hope to get a few points across: YiB not only cultivates one's interest in learning, it is a camp that plants the seeds of learning as well. YiB brings kids back from years before because it is so unforgettable and so many skills are learned here. It is a wonderful place, and everyone should experience it at least once in their life.

## **Sonia, 14**

YingHua Summer Program, what can I say? It was a great experience! I really hope I'll get the opportunity to come back next year and see the Guang Ai students again. I'd like to come back because I've learned so much in just four weeks - much more than if I were sitting around at home doing nothing. I learned more than how to read and write Chinese better; I learned practical life lessons such as leadership skills, which have made me more mature. I liked how in this camp we were able to learn and still have a good time.

I have become more appreciative and grateful than before for everything everyone does for me. I appreciate the teachers at the summer camp for taking their time out of their summer to teach us and to help us become better people for the society. I am more grateful for the things I have and do not whine about the thing I don't. Before this program, once I got mad at my mother for not buying me this shirt I really wanted. She ended up buying it. Remembering that scene, I think I looked like a spoiled brat. Did I appreciate it when she went back to get me that shirt? Not much. My mom is always thinking about me; it should be the other way around from now on. When I get back, I'll work on that and hopefully make it possible.

Lastly, I'd tell people this camp was well worth the trip. If you think it's like any other camps, you'd better think again. This camp is a whole new experience and adventure - almost like a life changer. You meet new people, go to new places, and get to try new food. Risk-taking is the key to this camp. I'm really glad I got to go to this program and I hope you'll get the same opportunity as I did.

## **Sophia, 12**

This camp was a great and fantastic experience for me! I would have never thought this camp would be this fun. I thought it would be a normal camp with just fun and games, and a few boring Mandarin lessons, but I thought wrong! This camp was not just fun and games; it was from field trips to the Great Wall all the way to visiting elders and making poor orphans grow a smile on their faces. We gave people love, togetherness, and most importantly, celebration starting a new life! So I am very thankful that I came to a camp like this instead of sitting around watching TV or wandering around my house looking for something to do. I hope I have given people friendship, laughter, and kindness!

The thing which I think I have most improved on is being more confident! Back in Hong Kong I never really believed in myself and would think I didn't know everything so I would make it harder for myself. Now all my hardships and stressing are thrown in the trash! All the teachers are nice enough to help those who don't understand or need a hand. Many teachers who belonged to this camp taught me to believe in myself and to try my best! They said when I wanted to cry I should just cry, and this does help in many situations. I was homesick and wished I didn't have to study so much. I shortly changed my mind and started following what other people said. I studied hard and achieved getting a successful grade. I got myself to lead a good future at very high standards. This taught me a valuable lesson which I will follow for years.

A person who is thinking about going here should definitely change their mind and say YES! If you are looking for a place to learn large amounts of Mandarin and to go on many exciting adventures then YingHua in Beijing is the place for you! You will learn how to be more responsible, how to study, getting yourself a fantastic score, and how to communicate with many different kinds of people all over Beijing. You can surely consider yourself a Mandarin speaker by the time you end this amazing, adventurous summer camp!

## Tia, 12

I remember on the first day of camp, feeling a little homesick and nervous and thinking that four weeks were so long a time to be so far from home. But now, at our last reflection, it feels like barely a week has passed since I first stepped into the room 1416 of the Yong An Hotel. I had so much fun during these packed 28 days, and met so many amazing new people. Thanks to all the teachers who left their families and homes just to teach and spend some time with us, Robert for being the best (and only) counselor, all the other campers for making camp even funner and Liao Laoshi for making this whole amazing experience possible.

During these four weeks, I think I've grown in being more reflective, caring, and risk-taking. I write in my journal every night, along with our daily reflections. I've gotten better at comforting people who are sad or hurt, and I've become more risk-taking, mainly around food – I don't really like vegetables, but I've been trying them and realized that I really like broccoli!

To somebody who's feeling a little reluctant to come to this camp, I'd say, "I felt the same way at first. But coming to this camp is a choice you won't regret, 'cause I know that I don't!" 😊

## Tristan, 13

Wow, four weeks went by like a blink. I remember first seeing Ben and Ryan back in America. I remember meeting James, the last member in our room. I remember seeing Shannon, Ming-Ming, Lin-Lin, and all the teachers I became friends with last year. I could go on about all the memories here at YingHua because this is how much I loved this camp. Even being back for the second year, I still loved the field trips, meeting new friends and learning Chinese. Most impressions in this camp are positive and I may just come back again.

I have changed for the better over the last four weeks. My Chinese has steadily improved and I am now using it with natives. The kids at Guang Ai have changed my perspective on life. They have almost nothing and it makes me appreciate what my parents do for me. This really humbles me and I will learn to respect more.

I think any incoming student will genuinely enjoy their experiences at YingHua. One learns about Chinese culture, the language, and ultimately grows and becomes principled as a person. If anyone is reluctant to go to this camp they shouldn't be. One will instantly make friends. This camp isn't perfect, but it is not far away. It is a positive experience that anyone can go through. This camp is great for everyone.

## Robert, 20

My name is Robert Zhang. I am 20 years old. I was a counselor for YingHua in Beijing 2011. How do you know what a person is all about? That is, how do you know what kind of man he is? I will ask him his intentions. Why does he do what he does? For what reason does he do anything that he does? This is a hard question to answer for anyone, but it is vital for every person to have a clear answer to this question in his own heart, for the alternative is that a man does something haphazardly, randomly, and these only become recipes for vanity. The answer that proceeds out of that man, in truth, describes what kind of seed he has planted to grow, in his work or his life or his relationships, and therefore what *kind* of fruit he will bear in spending time doing that thing, or nurturing that seed.

So how will one judge a Summer Camp? I will ask it the same question I asked the man. What is its intention? YiB gives all its students and teachers a very clear answer. It is a Summer Language and Leadership Institute and it exists to teach the Chinese language, the Chinese culture, to cultivate leadership qualities, and in a broader sense, through all things, guide students in ways that they may discover *themselves* in order to become better people. So in all things, in all things that YiB spends its time doing, this is the seed that it nurtures and its fruit is great. Look at all the final reflections of the students from this year and years past, and the fruit becomes evident, therefore the seed becomes evident, and therefore YiB has not made false claims concerning itself, and we have heard and judged correctly.

One out of the many things that makes Liao Laoshi a great teacher in relation to what I have learned this year as a counselor is that she creates for her students, like me, the opportunity to discover for *themselves* how to become better people. This method of teaching is the one of the strongest, but also the most difficult, because it is hard to tell when to push and when to let go, but Liao Laoshi excels at it. The first seed she plants in her students is a mindset of positivity, a self-willingness to learn, and to actually try to be better at whatever they're doing. Then she will believe in you, and you will try harder or smarter than you ever did because of it, you will realize your own results, and following that, you will begin to believe in yourself.

How do you get kids to feel like you believe in them? Paradoxically, you don't do much. More importantly, it's what you choose not to do. And Liao Laoshi is great at this. When the average educator might reflexively lecture a student after he does something wrong and be done with the whole situation, Liao Laoshi takes this opportunity to really make clear to the student that he should really just think about it himself. What exactly did you do wrong? How do you feel about it? How can you be better in the future? Write a small essay, give it back by the end of the day, and we'll talk about it.

By doing this, she implicitly sends this message: "I am entrusting you with your own discipline. I believe that you can discipline yourself." And then the student will actually reflect and discipline himself, more than if he were to simply be on the receiving end of discipline, just blankly absorbing all the lecturing and punishment without really making any effort to change. This time, the discipline comes from within and is therefore significant. If no one ever trusts that student with his own discipline, no one gives him the chance to ever let him change himself, and he will never learn how to do that. This is why Liao Laoshi is a great educator. The lessons students learn in this way create strong and lasting impressions. This method has the power to really change the core of how a student makes his choices. Not only in disciplinary situations, but in trying new things, taking responsibility, and pushing oneself past limits, anything.

And I've learned so many things, because she's used this same method of teaching on me. She only told me explicitly to help her write the newsletter, and outside of that, honestly I could just be on vacation if I wanted to do because she has no time to be breathing down my neck, but nevertheless she expects me to do a good job on my own, and knowing this and feeling this, that's enough for a 20 year old to rise up to the occasion.

Now the hard part is, now that I have free reign, what exactly do I do? I get in what I put in so I have to think about it my intentions and goals and once I felt like things were going smoothly enough with what I was doing and how I was doing it, I learned that it's definitely a bad idea to stop there. I have to go the *extra* mile while I'm feeling content. But a nagging question is "Why should I exert myself to go the extra mile?" And this is where establishing intentions come into play because I can remind myself in times when I would rather be lazy. So I would think, for the benefit of the students and the teachers around me.

And what else I learned is that I should definitely ask for feedback and seek criticism from other people when I feel like there's nothing more I can do, because I can't presume to be taking into account all aspects of my job. I'm just one guy. Furthermore, I'm just one guy with a self-absorbed mindset. Therefore, other people should have extremely valuable criticism I can learn from because they hold an entirely different perspective. And it's going to be uncomfortable to hear, and might even hurt, but it's for

the better. I have to push through that pride and humble myself in order to change. Then, I analyze and reflect on the criticism according to my best judgment and then change my behavior in the future to make YiB a little better. It's always going to be an adaptive process, and feeling disappointed with myself sometimes and feeling that things are difficult are actually good signs. In order to be successful, it's always going to feel hard, because I always have to push past my comfort zone in order to do better. If I'm feeling content and restless, I'm probably doing something wrong because I could be doing more. And that's what I learned.

And that's YiB for me. It's a great experience for kids of all ages, and for Liao Laoshi and all the staff it's a labor of love. Profit incurred from this entire venture by Liao Laoshi is negligible. The reward is in the work for her and for all of us. So as for our intentions? We do it for the the kids, and the fruits are clear to see.