

Shanghai



THE WORLD IS YOUR CLASSROOM

It was an uncommon scene in a small classroom in Randolph County: Four headmasters from rural China seated with a group of enrapt middle-school students, discussing education policy and Southern barbecue.

These Chinese educators, and 14 of their counterparts, spent eight days reflecting with school leaders in some of North Carolina's most rural counties.

Dr. Ye He, associate professor in UNC Greensboro's Department of Teacher Education and Higher Education, helmed the visit.

"To prepare global-ready students and lead global-ready schools, educators need to participate in intercultural exchanges," Dr. He says.

Her mission as a teacher educator is to engage teachers at the local and international level. She emphasizes strengths-based, diverse-language, and culture-centered teaching.

"It's not about who is learning from whom," she says. "We all have our various strengths and utilize them in different contexts."

He's headmasters project is funded by the Jack Ma Foundation, an organization created by the executive chairman of the world's largest retailer, Chinese e-commerce company Alibaba Group. One focus of the foundation is the promotion of leadership and management skills for headmasters in rural China.

The foundation chose UNCG as its international partner because of the university's successes in working with rural educators, including the recent Principal Preparation for Excellence and Equity in Rural Schools initiative led by the School of Education's Dr. Kimberly Kappler-Hewitt. With \$1.8 million from the NC Alliance for School Leadership Development, the initiative is helping 11 North Carolina school districts that are struggling to find and keep effective principals in high-needs schools.

Through the headmasters project, the Jack Ma Foundation aims to enhance management of schools and programming in rural China by broadening headmasters' scope of knowledge. At UNCG, the goal is to provide North Carolina rural principals and teachers with opportunities for global engagement.

"Depending on the resources you have, students may never have the opportunity to really go to China," Dr. He says. "But this

INTERNATIONAL TIES Several of the School of Education's international educator-preparation experiences involve a long-running relationship with Shanghai Normal University in China. Since 2014, 34 UNCG students have traveled there to connect with local schools.

type of program makes it more mobile – you don't have to go to China to interact with a Chinese principal."

Dr. He (image right) hopes that UNCG's partnership with the Jack Ma Foundation will lead to long-term engagement. She and her colleagues are collecting data to assess the collaboration's success. Thus far, they have seen a large increase in participants' willingness to take risks. Participants said they felt comfortable sharing thoughts and ideas, despite any language barriers, and expressed interest in continuing professional development.

"We have found so far that generally the principals are very satisfied with our preparation and our program, and their experiences here," Dr. He says. "Overall there is an increase in all aspects of knowledge – in terms of language, history, cultural customs, and the education system of the U.S."

Tingting Huang, project manager for Jack Ma's Rural Headmasters Initiative, says the visit exceeded expectations.

"What we have learned here can be directly used to guide how we're going to work on school improvement plans. We hope that in the future there is more collaboration between the foundation and UNCG, and I believe that will happen."

By Elizabeth L. Harrison • Photography By Mike Dickens • Learn more at <https://go.uncg.edu/TeacherEducation>



Dr. He, in conjunction with Dr. Kristine Lundgren in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders, also recently completed a U.S. Department of Education-funded project that took 12 N.C. educators abroad for an intercultural program in China. The educators spent four weeks in China, observing K-16 classes, partnering with Chinese teachers, and more. Upon their return, participants designed curriculum activities based on their experiences for their students.

A GLOBAL, LOCAL EDUCATION

In the United States, the English Learner population constitutes 9.1 percent of the K-12 student population. Yet English as a Second Language (ESL) and bilingual education teachers make up just 2 percent of K-12 teachers, according to the National Center for Education.

Dr. He says some estimates predict we will need to increase the ESL and bilingual education teaching force by 34 percent.

"In North Carolina, we have a growing number of students with multilingual backgrounds," she says. Between 2004 and 2014, the state's English Learner population increased by 36 percent.

"It's important we provide opportunities to not only learn the English language but to develop bilingually."

With a recent \$2.5 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education, Dr. He is rising to that challenge.

Her Engaging and Advancing Community-Centered Teacher Development project, or EnACTeD, is a partnership among UNCG and Guilford and Forsyth county schools.

The project uses a community-centered approach and aims to engage teacher educators, teacher candidates, families, and community partners.

Over five years, He and her colleagues will provide professional development for educators working with English Learners, develop a new academic concentration for preservice teachers and a similar add-on program for in-service teachers, and implement ESL classes, workshops, and

activities for families.

The project is already making progress, with planning team meetings and strong participation by the N.C. Department of Public Instruction and school districts.

"It's 'glocal' engagement," says He.

The participants and language may be international, but the activity and impact are local.

Dr. He sees bilingual education impact as far-reaching.

"Learning another language empowers you to communicate and expand your collaboration with others."

Students who are prepared to be more globally aware, she says, will understand how to influence the world.