

ESTABLISHING A STUDENT-STAFFED & MANAGED LEARNING CENTER

SEPTEMBER 20-21 2025
SHEKOU INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

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Discover how to elevate authentic student agency that inspires an inclusive literacy-rich culture of learning.

In this two-day workshop, participants learn the nuts-and-bolts of how to establish a successful student-staffed and managed learning center. This workshop builds on the success of the International School of Tianjin's Literacy Lab, a 10-year tested and proven model for a student-staffed and managed learning center that supports the acquisition of literacy skills. Using a simple philosophy rooted in discussion-based learning practices and supported by a sustainable organizational structure, the Literacy Lab was able to transform a small, teacher-driven writing center into a fully developed student-staffed and managed learning center that provides support for students in reading, writing, notetaking, presenting and discussing. The Literacy Lab is staffed by over 60 student volunteers—coaches, managers, and a supervisor. The lab provides support for students in grades 5-12 during lunch and after school and records over 1200 visits a year from students seeking academic support—nearly four times the number of students currently enrolled in the school's secondary division. Our program has been adopted by over 15 schools across Asia, from the International School of Ulaanbaatar to the New International School of Thailand.



The model that has allowed the Literacy Lab to achieve this level of success is rooted in inquiry and discussion-based practices that promote respectful, authentic, and often mutually beneficial dialogue. When engaging in a workshop, student volunteers do not act as tutors or give advice to students seeking academic support. Instead, volunteers serve as coaches and engage in conversations using specific strategies to help guide students to think critically about their work and develop creative solutions to their unique challenges. This model not only reinforces essential approaches to learning but ultimately empowers students by creating opportunities for them to take responsibility for their own learning and by acknowledging their innate ability to do so through meaningful dialogue.

WHO SHOULD ATTEND?

Students in grades 6-12 and supporting adults (teachers, librarians, service coordinators, and curriculum coordinators). We strongly encourage attending adults to bring at least 1-2 interested students. This is not, however, mandatory. Adults are welcome to attend on their own if they have not yet identified interested student leaders.

WHAT WILL PARTICIPANTS LEARN?

Participants learn and practice key strategies and receive practical tools that will enable them to establish an effective learning center in their school, including how to:

- Create a simple guiding philosophy that promotes inclusion and ensures sustainability
- Use cognitive coaching strategies to work with students one-on-one and employ 10 different feedback strategies to facilitate group workshops
- Create tiered levels of involvement that create authentic, real-world leadership opportunities for students
- Tackle myths about student agency, student-driven learning and literacy instruction
- Encourage teachers to actively support the center and embed the center's strategies in classroom practices
- Promote the center's services to the community and encourage parent involvement
- Manage change sustainably in order to accommodate shifts in student population and teaching staff

WHO'S LEADING THE WORKSHOP?

This workshop will be led by the teacher responsible for developing the program along with student supervisors, managers and coaches.

