

MSU-China International Study Tour
Sponsored through
The Education Policy Fellowship Program
The US-China Center for Research on Educational Excellence
&
The Office of K-12 Outreach, College of Education
Michigan State University

October 18-28, 2007
Beijing – Xi'an – Shanghai, China

In October 2007 Michigan State University's (MSU) College of Education and the Institute for Educational Leadership's (IEL) Education Policy Fellowship Program (EPFP) collaborated to organize an International Study Tour to China. This collaboration builds on IEL's tradition of convening leaders and exposing them to the complex issues that face policy makers, and MSU's focus on preparing professionals for leadership roles in education and its extensive international partnerships. Both organizations share the commitment to equip leaders in education and associated domains to succeed in the age of globalization.

Michigan State University's (MSU) College of Education has extensive experience in organizing and sponsoring international study tours for educational leaders in Michigan and throughout the U.S. Leadership for the MSU-China International Study Tours is provided by University Distinguished Professor and Director of the US-China Center for Research on Educational Excellence Yong Zhao, Assistant Dean for K-12 Outreach Barbara Markle and Michigan EPFP Coordinator and MSU consultant Dan Schultz. The goals of the international study tours are to:

- Inform and broaden the perspectives of education leaders of education reforms from pre-school through higher education in an international context;
- Position education leaders to anticipate and plan for change in a global context rather than to react to education changes in other countries;
- Provide policy leaders with an international perspective as they shape and influence education in Michigan and the U.S.

The international study tour participants hold key leadership roles in educational organizations, in state government, in K-12 school systems, in colleges and universities and in non-profit organizations. These leaders are provided opportunities to meet with professional counterparts in China to discuss China's national, provincial and municipal educational systems and to explore the pressing educational reform issues that mirror many of the challenges facing U.S. educators. The delegation members are also able to visit several model pre-K, elementary, middle/junior and secondary schools, leading universities and independent education organizations. Participants also meet with some of China's premier educational research and professional development institutions and technology corporations.

Members of the October 2007 Delegation:

- Catherine Allen, Regional Director, North Carolina Model Teacher Education Consortium, University of North Carolina
- Claudia Amboyer, Retired Middle School Teacher
- Donald Amboyer, Vice Provost, Learning Outreach, Macomb Community College
- Michael Boulus, Executive Director, Presidents Council, State Universities of Michigan
- Marian Boulus, Small Business Owner
- George Brust, Industry Management Director, RMS McGladrey, Richfield, Minnesota
- Janny Brust, Director, Medical Policy and Community Affairs, Minnesota Council of Health Plans
- Yvonne Caamal Canul, CEO, Caamal Canul Consulting, LLC, Lansing, Michigan
- Beatriz Casals, President, Casals and Associates, Alexandria, Virginia
- Gayle Green, Assistant Superintendent, Macomb ISD
- Michael Hansen, President, Michigan Community College Association
- Marcia Kaye, Retired Principal and Coach, MSU/Michigan Department of Education
- John Kaye, Respiratory Therapist, Spectrum Health
- Barbara Markle, Assistant Dean, Office of K-12 Outreach, College of Education, MSU
- Adriana Nichols, Director of Workforce Development, Michigan Community College Association
- Lynn Paine, Associate Professor, Department of Teacher Education, MSU
- Cheryl Poole, Education Specialist, Eaton Intermediate School District
- Dan Schultz, Senior Policy Advisor, Michigan Virtual University and Consultant, MSU
- Jack Schwille, Assistant Dean, International Studies in Education, MSU
- David Shreve, Federal Affairs Counsel, National Conference of State Legislatures, Washington, DC
- Harry Starnes, Director, North Carolina Principal Fellows Program, University of North Carolina
- Darwin Williams, Retired Deputy Superintendent, Trenton New Jersey Public School District
- Sally Wright, President, Norman S. Wright and Co. Pleasant Hill, California
- Shan Shan Zhao, Sichuan International Studies University, (PRC) (Translator)
- Yong Zhao, University Distinguished Professor, MSU

Activities of the Delegation:

Prior to the tour's departure, delegation members were provided briefing materials on the itinerary, locations and types of schools and organizations to be visited, scholarly articles concerning globalization and its impact on education, and historical and cultural information about the cities to be visited. All participants were encouraged to read Thomas Friedman's *The World Is Flat*, Ted Fishman's *China, Inc.*, Peter Hessler's *The*

Oracle Bones: A Journey Between China's Past and Present, and *River Town: Two Years on the Yangtze*, and Rob Gifford's *China Road*. Participants were provided a copy of *Customs and Etiquette of China* by Caroline Mason and Geoffrey Murray. Periodic e-mail updates were prepared by the Office of K-12 Outreach as the departure date approached and as the meeting schedules in Beijing, Xi'an, and Shanghai were confirmed. Most delegation members participated in one of the pre-trip telephone conference calls to help prepare them for their visit to the People's Republic of China. These conference calls included remarks by the study tour leaders and a discussion of background materials developed following previous study tours. Karla Bellinger, lead secretary in the Office of K-12 Outreach at MSU coordinated the preparation, collection and distribution of documents, briefing materials and study tour information.

Thursday, October 18, 2007

Delegation members began their journey to Beijing from Lansing, Grand Rapids, Detroit Minneapolis/St. Paul, Raleigh, Philadelphia, San Francisco and Washington DC with pre-flight check-in, security clearance and domestic airline connections.

Friday, October 19, 2007

The group was met at the Beijing International Airport by tour leaders Barbara Markle and Dan Schultz, and the local Beijing guide. Airborne flight times, baggage collection, customs and immigration processing and bus transfer to the Beijing Capital Hotel made for nearly 24 hours of travel time. The study tour participants were introduced to Ms. Shan Shan Zhao, an Instructor of English and Public Administration at Nanfang Translators College, Sichuan International Studies University who joined the delegation as its translator. MSU Professor Dr. Jack Schwillie, who had traveled to China the previous week to participate in several meetings hosted by the Center for Teacher Education Research at Beijing Normal University (BNU), joined the group for the briefings and activities in Beijing

Saturday, October 20, 2007

The MSU/EPFP Study Tour coincided with the Communist Party of China's 17th National Party Congress being held in Beijing. This weeklong National Party Congress provided the study tour participants with insights into the Chinese political system, including leadership transition and policy adoption processes. Because a number of the National Party Congress delegates were staying in the Beijing Capital Hotel, the study tour participants experienced some enhanced security in their hotel and traffic delays in Beijing. The group also observed some impressive floral displays, a very clean central city area, and an occasional street demonstration.

The first morning began with a briefing at the hotel led by Barbara Markle and Dan Schultz that provided the delegation members with an overview of the activities planned during the group's stay in Beijing. The main activity for the day was to attend the 2007 China Annual Conference for International Education held at the Jinglun Hotel, sponsored by the China Educational Association for International Exchange (CEAIE) and supported by the Chinese Ministry of Education (MOE). The conference was the 8th China International Forum on Education and the agenda focused on education,

innovation, quality and creating a harmonious society. The CEAIE is China's nationwide not-for-profit non-governmental organization that conducts international educational exchanges. Founded in 1981, the CEAIE supports China's modernization efforts, develops exchanges and cooperation between the Chinese education community and other countries, promotes the advancement of education, culture, science and technology, and strengthens understanding and friendship among peoples throughout the world. The organization is funded by the Chinese government, through membership fees and other revenues, and corporate and individual donations.

Some of the study tour members attended the morning International Seminar on Higher Education Evaluation and the China – U.S. University Presidents Forum. The theme of this conference session was Higher Education Quality Evaluation and Accreditation System. Featured speakers included Mr. Liu Fengtai, Director of the Higher Education Evaluation Centre, Chinese MOE; Ms. Jean Avnet Morse, President of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education; Professor Shi Yajun, Chairman of the Administrative Committee, China University of Political Science and Law; and Mr. Richard Rush, President of California State University - Channel Islands.

In the afternoon, the delegation members attended the International Seminar on Basic Education, with the theme of “The Reform of Basic Education in the 21st Century – Development and Harmonious Society.” The seminar began with opening remarks from Mr. Qian Yicheng, Vice President of the CEAIE and Ms. Rosemary Potter, Associate Director of the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT) based in the U.K. The SSAT is a member of the International Networking for Educational Transformation (iNET) and iNET China leaders assisted with the development of the conference. Featured speakers included MOE officials, and educators from China, Finland, the U.K. and the U.S.

Dr. Hao Keming, President of the China Society for Education Research Strategy and Professor at both Peking University and BNU, spoke on “The Only-Child Group and Basic Education Reform in China.” The “only child” group refers to the children being raised in China's single child families, a phenomena resulting from the central government's one child policy. It is estimated that China has over 90 million children from single child families and this group has posed new challenges to basic education reform. She discussed her research on some of the challenges facing elementary, middle and high schools and the concerns of the central government. These include:

- How living without sisters or brothers impacts children and families;
- The overly protective parents of the only child;
- Concerns that these children are not independent and risk being self-centered;
- The difficulty that these children have communicating with other people; and
- The parental expectations for these children.

Her research involves surveys on student access to technology, studies of the attitudes of students, student career expectations, their plans for education or careers after high school, their physical conditioning, school attendance and absence data, and family and social environment studies. One of Professor Hao's goals is to improve the quality of

China's education through reforms in classrooms, pedagogy, student motivation and international cooperation. This presentation was followed by remarks from Mr. Ari Huovinen, Principal of the Ressu Upper Secondary School in Helsinki Finland, who discussed "The Finnish Way to Quality Education."

The international panel presentation focusing on education reform was led by Dr. Dinghua Wang, Deputy Director General of the Basic Education Department in the MOE. He provided remarks on "Equity and Quality of Basic Education in China." This presentation was made in English, and included an overview of several recent education reform policies. Dr. Wang generously provided a copy of his PowerPoint slides from which the following information is excerpted. He began with a discussion that highlighted some of the new circumstances that China is facing. These include:

- During the first two decades of the 21st Century, China will face a complicated and changing international situation and more acute competition in the knowledge economy. The nation needs to meet and take full advantage of the challenges and opportunities of economic globalization.
- China will concentrate its efforts on building a well-off society, with higher standards to benefit its 1.3 billion people.
- In order to better respond to the socioeconomic changes, China will further develop the market economy, improve democracy, enrich culture, foster greater social harmony and upgrade people's lives.
- The Chinese government has put forward a scientific development outlook of "putting people in the first place" and "promoting harmonious development of economy and society" and the idea of "building a socialist harmonious society."
- In order to convert the population pressure into huge human resources, the Chinese government has adopted the strategy of reinvigorating the country through science and education.

Dr. Wang noted that China has made tremendous achievements in K-12 education and referenced the following accomplishments:

- More than 98% of the population areas have realized the nine-year compulsory education goal, which covers the primary and middle school period.
- All students in rural areas nationwide enjoy free compulsory education now; free of tuition, free of miscellaneous fees, and free textbooks.
- The enrollment rate for high schools is 59.2% in 2006.
- Both the central and local governments each exercise responsibilities to guarantee and promote the development of K-12 education.
- Private school education consists of about 5% of total primary, middle and high schools and students.
- Most of the nation's 10 million teachers are well motivated to teach.
- School building construction and infrastructures have improved a great deal.

He also discussed some of the equity and quality challenges that China's education system is facing. Although K-12 education in China has made significant advances, the overall development has been quite uneven and imbalanced between urban and rural areas, and between the east and west. Obvious gaps exist between schools and many can

neither respond well to the needs of rapid socio-economic development, nor satisfy the aspiration of the masses for balanced basic education. He described three different categories of equalities: equity between areas; equity between student groups; and equity between schools in the same area.

He stated that quality is a lifeline for education. High quality education not only refers to advanced infrastructure, but also refers to a qualified teaching contingent, improved teaching processes, better management, and the proper philosophy of running schools. The demand is increasing from the public for a high quality education. Currently the quality of some schools fails to meet the demands of parents, especially in the one family/one child era. The quality of teachers needs to be improved. Currently there are 240,000 teachers with lower academic degrees and 450,000 non-registered teachers.

Dr. Wang next discussed several strategies that China uses to measure equity and quality in basic education.

- Implement laws and policies, including the compulsory education law as a precondition for equity; promote balanced develop of compulsory education between east and west, between urban and rural areas and between schools in the same region; and provide more financial input for school infrastructure.
- Set up fundamental or basic standards for schools, including school standards; personal standards for teachers; standards for teacher's wages; and standards for public funding.
- Adopt a national core curriculum to ensure basic requirements. The MOE has developed national curriculum standards that include all core curricular areas. The MOE sets guidance for provincial level curriculum design, but does not interfere in regional autonomy. Each school may set its own school-based curriculum. According to teaching hours, the national curricula comprise 80%, the provincial curricula comprise 15% and the local school curriculum comprises 5%.
- Beginning in 2001, 550 counties began to pilot the new curricula, usually beginning in grade 1 and grade 7. By 2005, all primary and middle schools in all counties in China's 31 provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions implemented the new curriculum. In 2004, four provinces began to pilot the new high school curriculum. In 2007, 16 provinces implemented the new curriculum and by 2008 most of the provinces are expected to implement the new high school curriculum.

Dr. Wang highlighted several policies designed to support teacher development and the rotation of teachers among schools. He noted that it is an ongoing challenge to recruit teachers to the western provinces of China. To attract more talented people to join the teaching profession, policies now exist to provide free education for teacher candidates at six of China's normal universities. The government has also implemented a new Gardener's Project where "teachers are the gardeners and students are the flowers." Another strategy to reward excellent teachers has been to adopt September 10 as National Teacher's Day. In conjunction with this strategy, some grocery stores give teachers discounts on various food products. Other strategies to improve the quality of teachers include creating codes of conduct of teachers, promotion incentives or housing stipends.

Other quality improvement strategies for schools include providing letter grades instead of marks based on a 100 point system; more student encouragement; greater emphasis on all aspects of learning will be encouraged; and innovations to support preparation for the entrance examinations will be conducted. New teaching and learning innovations are being advocated including interactive learning; hands-on ability; teaching students how to fish, rather than just giving them a fish; greater emphasis on social activities and community participation; and more project oriented study and team work. Another strategy is the emphasis on the use of instructional communications technology (ITC) in the schools. Through the introduction of ITC, quality educational resources can reach all schools including those in the remote and poor areas. The MOE is also making use of online professional development.

The MOE is placing greater emphasis on educational supervision and the inspection of schools. This strategy is designed to improve educational administration and school management. The MOE has begun to send supervisors and inspectors to different provinces to ensure that national education laws and policies are being carried out properly. The MOE has adopted a set of school effectiveness indicators and Child Friendly School criteria. Dr. Wang concluded his remarks by noting that the MOE is working closely with a number of international organizations, including UNESCO, the World Bank and the Commission on International and Trans-Regional Accreditation (CITA) to conduct research and enhance international cooperation for basic education. These collaborative efforts in the field of education help to bring different countries closer together.

Three members of the MSU/EPFP Study Tour delegation participated on the panel and were asked to discuss K-12 education and higher education reform in the U.S. Ms. Yvonne Caamal Canul, former Director of the Office of School Improvement for the Michigan Department of Education addressed the topic “K-12 Education in the U.S: The State Perspective” and discussed the impact of the federal No Child Left Behind education reform legislation and the impact of this reform effort on state policy. Her remarks highlighted the role of the states in adopting state education standards, how state standards are assessed and evaluated, and the new expectations that are being placed on individual schools and students.

Next, Dr. Gayle Green, the Chief Academic Officer for the Macomb Intermediate School District discussed “Local Implementation of Statewide Standards.” Her remarks addressed the mission of K-12 education, the relationship between the adoption of state policies and the implementation of the policy at the local and regional levels, and how national and state standards translate to student outcomes.

Dr. Michael Boulus, Executive Director of the Presidents Council, State Universities of Michigan next discussed “K-16 Education in a U.S. Context.” His remarks described the evolution of two education systems in the U.S. (the K-12 and postsecondary systems) and the need to bring these systems into closer alignment. He identified five issues that are central to this policy discussion: high school requirements; student testing; college

admissions expectations; teacher preparation; and concerns about college cost. Each of the U.S. panelists acknowledged the importance of working with other nations.

Other panel presentations were made by Mr. Wang Jiajun, Principal of Huijia Private School, who discussed “Private Schools in Promoting the Balanced Development of Education and Ms. Anne Cole, Headteacher of the Saltley School in Birmingham England, who spoke on “Education Equity – The U.K. Perspective.”

Sunday, October 21, 2007

In the morning the delegation members traveled by bus to visit the Juyong Guan section of the Great Wall of China, about one and a half hours north of Beijing in Yanqing County. Before climbing the Great Wall and taking pictures of the stunning scenery, the participants convened for a group photo. In the afternoon the group returned to Beijing to tour the Imperial Summer Palace and the many buildings and gardens that are part of this extensive development, designated in 1998 by UNESCO as a World Heritage site. With the expertise and assistance of the local guide and our interpreter, these experiences provided opportunities for the participants to develop a greater understanding of Chinese history, culture, architecture and landscaping. In the evening the study tour participants were treated to a performance of the Beijing Opera at the impressive Liyuan Theater. This artistic program featured performances of classic Chinese plays, traditional musical arrangements and gymnastic routines with simultaneous English translation.

Monday, October 22, 2007

In the morning the delegation members visited an innovative bi-cultural pre-school for children ages 3-5 called the 3e International Kindergarten (Explore, Experiment and Express). The group was met by Ms. Rowena Yang, the school’s Director of School Affairs, Ms. Nadia Perez, the Principal and Mr. Gilbert Choy, the Chief Executive Officer of the Sunwah Education Laboratories, Inc. Mr. Choy began the briefing by discussing the philanthropic work of the Sunwah Foundation and noted that the school represents an investment by the Foundation of approximately \$3.5 million. He discussed the 3e International Kindergarten’s accomplishments to date and its plans for the future.

Founded in 2005, the school was designed by MSU Professor Yong Zhao and is supported by the Sunwah Foundation of Hong Kong. Students in this experimental school spend one half day learning in English in a Western-style environment and the other half learning in Chinese in an Eastern-style environment. The delegation toured the unique three-story facility that includes a series of hands-on exhibits acquired from The Exploratorium, a hands-on science and art museum in San Francisco. As a result of a formal partnership agreement signed in 2004 with MSU’s College of Education (COE), several of the teachers at the school include recent MSU graduates and this year MSU placed its first 5th year student intern at the school. Several of the native Chinese educators received their formal education at BNU. The 3e School also has an artist-in-residence from Michigan.

The school started with 3 children and currently serves 80 students representing 17 different countries. There are plans to add a first grade class in 2008. The school is

licensed to serve the expatriate community and it is prohibited from enrolling a student whose nationality is Chinese. The school is permitted to hire qualified Chinese staff members. The school has hosted a large number of international visitors, including U.S. Department of Education officials, who are interested in the dual pedagogy concept. The 3e International Kindergarten does not advertise to recruit students but has benefited from word of mouth support and community building among parents. Mr. Choy noted that the 3e International Kindergarten is not just a cultural immersion school, and that the US-China Center for Research on Educational Excellence at MSU is working in Michigan and in other countries to expand this new vision for K-12 education.

Principal Nadia Perez, a recent MSU COE graduate discussed the 3e International Kindergarten's Curriculum Framework and the theme approach used with the instructional units. She noted that the 3e Preschool is a half-day program and the eastern and western teachers are working together with the children. In the Kindergarten program the teachers spend a great deal of time planning the eastern and western instruction, and while they don't teach together, they plan together. The curriculum and school design is built for replication. One of the goals of the dual language/dual pedagogy program is to prepare the school's students to communicate without bias with other children. The 3e International School seeks to develop global citizens who are conversant in multiple languages and capable of working in different cultures.

In the afternoon the delegation members traveled to Capital Normal University (CNU) in central Beijing to meet with university leaders and to tour the campus. The briefing was led by Dr. Wang Wanliang, Vice President of CNU and Professor of Mathematics, Ms. Han Mei, Associate Professor and Associate Dean of the College of International Education, and Mr. Bingke Guo, from the International Exchange Office, in the College of International Education who served as the translator for the briefing. Established in 1954, CNU is a comprehensive normal university that was formed by consolidating several other universities. CNU's main campus is centrally located in Beijing and there are six other campuses in the city. The university is under the responsibility of the Beijing Municipal Government and the city is responsible for providing funding for the university. The majority of the staff and students come from Beijing and more than 50% of Beijing's school teachers are CNU alumni. With nearly 100,000 graduates to date, CNU has 17 colleges and departments, 47 undergraduate specialties, 107 master degree and 40 doctoral degree disciplines. CNU is considered a key university in China and is recognized as the nation's number one ranked art education program. The College of International Education was established in 1999 and CNU has developed academic exchange programs with more than 110 institutions around the world. It has established a dual degree program with Leeds University in the U.K., and faculty training exchange programs with the University of Minnesota and with St. Petersburg University in Russia. CNU operates 12 teacher training programs with approximately 4,100 candidates. As an incentive to attract new teachers, the Beijing central government will waive the tuition charges for teacher education majors who agree to teach in Beijing schools for at least six years. The teacher education program is influenced by theories introduced from scholars who have studied abroad, including the past president of BNU and Professor Zhao of MSU. The study tour participants discussed the possibility of forming international

partnerships and cooperative relationships with CNU faculty and students. These partnerships might include undergraduate or graduate student exchanges, research and knowledge exchange or the formation of 2+2+1 programs.

MSU Professor Dr. Lynn Paine's extensive knowledge and understanding of China's education system and the Chinese language and culture proved to be an asset during these briefings. As a Chinese education scholar, Dr. Paine is fluent in Mandarin and in several instances she was able to provide insight into a key point or translate a difficult technical concept for her U.S. colleagues.

Following an afternoon of sightseeing and shopping in central Beijing, the delegation experienced a traditional Peking Duck Dinner at an area restaurant.

Tuesday, October 23, 2007

Prior to an afternoon flight to Xi'an, members of the delegation visited Tiananmen Square and the Forbidden City in central Beijing. Extensive floral displays created for the 17th National Party Congress were on exhibit at Tiananmen Square across from the 2008 Olympic countdown clock. Transportation to the Beijing Airport, baggage collection, check-in, flight-time and transfer to the Aurum International Hotel in Xi'an, located in Shaanxi Province in central China required approximately six hours.

Wednesday, October 24, 2007

The delegation members traveled by bus to visit the Museum of the Terra-Cotta Warriors and Horses, the largest on-site museum in China, located approximately one hour from central Xi'an. This museum, considered by the Chinese to be the "Eighth Wonder of the World" is a research facility that continues to discover and investigate the cultural relics attributed to Emperor Qin Shi Huang, the first emperor in Chinese history. Opened to the public in 1979, the exhibits display thousands of restored pottery warrior figures and bronze chariots and horses. The delegation viewed a 360-degree movie that recreates the construction and subsequent destruction of Emperor Qin's terra-cotta army approximately 2,200 years ago. After visiting the three buildings and viewing the exhibits, a group photo was taken. In the afternoon, following a buffet luncheon, the delegation visited a commercial Jade Art Factory and viewed several intricate carvings. The participants had some free time for sightseeing and shopping in Xi'an before an evening special dumpling dinner.

Thursday, October 25, 2007

The delegation members next moved on to Shanghai, the final destination on the study tour. Transportation to the airport, baggage handling, check-in, flight-time and transfer to the Sofitel Hyland Hotel in Shanghai, in coastal Jiangsu Province, required approximately four hours. The hotel is located in central Shanghai on the historic and bustling Nanjing Road.

After checking into the hotel, the group traveled by bus to visit Shanghai Yucai High School (YHS), the largest of the 11 boarding schools in Shanghai. Mr. Zhu Jizheng, Principal and several members of the school's faculty members provided a briefing and a

tour of the campus. YHS is located on 18 hectares of land and has extensive classroom, performance, athletic, and residential facilities. Founded in 1901, YHS is a key school and is well known for its history and many successful graduates. It serves as a model high school for the nation. The philosophy of the school is “education for life,” which means it seeks to educate each student in such a way that they have the opportunity to build a good moral character, a well-developed personality, a strong physique, a creative mind and a solid foundation for further academic studies. The school currently enrolls 1,500 students and offers 32 classes taught by 170 teachers. Most of the students come from Shanghai and the school is restricted from recruiting from other parts of the country. The graduates of YHS go on to attend the most prestigious universities in China and they are attractive candidates because they are independent and know how to study.

Dr. Barbara Markle provided introductory remarks on behalf of the delegation and invited questions from the participants. In response to a question about how the school selects its teachers, Mr. Zhu noted that the school has established high standards and requirements, and that the teachers must have a solid foundation of academic preparation and a good sense of morality. YHS selects its teachers from both the normal and comprehensive universities. Some former students choose to come back after graduating from the university to teach in the school. Mr. Zhu indicated that he encourages YHS teachers to go on to obtain both MA and Ph.D. degrees and the school provides some financial resources to assist them. Another question involved the teacher’s perceptions of the challenges that face students. The responses included study pressure, communicating with classmates, roommates and parents, the influence of the Internet, and student perceptions that they don’t need to study hard to be successful.

Friday, October 26, 2007

The study tour members visited the Shanghai Academy of Educational Sciences (SAES), for a briefing and discussion. The SAES is an independent research organization that is different from research organizations that are based within universities. The SAES provides consulting services to both the Shanghai Municipal and National governments. Participating in the briefing and discussion were Dr. Gu Ling Yuan, Vice President of the SAES and Professor at East China Normal University; Professor Chen Gouliang, Executive President of the SAES and Director General for Education Monitoring Center, MOE; Professor Hu Ruiwen, Chairman of the Academic Committee of the SAES; Dr. Yudong Wang, Associate Professor SAES and Shanghai Branch of National Primary and Secondary Teacher Further Education; and Professor Wu Zengqiang, Director of Psychology, SAES and President of the Shanghai School Counseling Association.

There are five research institutes and centers in the Academy. These include the Basic Education Research Institute, the Higher Education Research Institute, the Vocational Technical Research Institute, the Institute for Human Resource Development, and the new Private Education Research Institute. These research centers address a variety of macro-level education policy studies, and studies involving community development, teacher training, training for school management, administration and policy, economic and social research, sustainable development and various services to the Shanghai city government. Previously supported with funding from the MOE and the Shanghai

government, the SAES is now shifting its source of revenue to contracts with both public and private sector organizations. The Academy's research agenda doesn't focus on classroom teaching strategies, but on strategies that translate policy to practice.

Examples of current research studies include:

- Concerns with school leavers and the difficulty they have in finding jobs;
- The rapid rate of change in Chinese society and the socio-economic challenges that this is creating;
- A renewed interest in vocational education and workforce development in light of the changing economy;
- The growth of for-profit schools and this private education trend is diversifying the education system;
- The need to improve the quality of education in rural areas and in the far west;
- With the rapid growth in university and graduate school enrollments, the need to make quality improvements and to have professors work closely with business and industry;
- Strategies to improve municipal government policy making to better integrate industry with the communities in which they reside;

The study tour members participated in an extensive discussion with their hosts on topics that included strategies for teacher preparation and professional development, the challenges of recruiting and retaining teachers, the role of school inspectors, the growth of boarding schools, the impact of globalization, and the potential of developing international cooperative relationships. In response to a question on the high demand fields of employment in the future in China, the SAES hosts identified the financial services, insurance and software industries as key areas, as well as education and fields that will support the development of joint ventures. As the group traveled by bus to the restaurant for lunch, Professor Lynn Paine led a discussion that provided additional insights into Chinese education reforms and the shift in emphasis from a highly centralized system.

In the afternoon the study tour participants met with MSU University Distinguished Professor Dr. Yong Zhao at the Sofitel Hotel for a wrap-up briefing and discussion. Several delegation members were acquainted with Dr. Zhao and Dr. Markle introduced him as a "true global citizen and as a visionary force for both the College of Education and MSU." In addition to serving as the Director of the US-China Center for Research on Educational Excellence, Professor Zhao is the Director of the Confucius Institute at MSU (CI-MSU). He discussed the value and importance of international travel for educators and the impact of globalization on policy making. He highlighted England and Australia as two countries that are well on the way to internationalizing their education systems. He referenced a recent Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll (2007) that pointed to new levels of support for students acquiring a second language and for promoting international education programs.

With China's rapid growth and development it is easy to perceive China as a global threat and he cautioned against developing a "Cold War" mentality in reaction. He discussed his work with policy makers in several countries and U.S. states and noted that state

governments need guidance in developing global perspectives. Governments need to change their view of economic growth and human capital development in an era where skilled people are mobile and talent is desired by many. He observed that “inter-cultural” or “cross-cultural” ambassadors are desperately needed by corporations to help them navigate the Chinese economic system. These individuals have unique skills and are highly valued.

In discussing the Chinese education system, Yong Zhao observed that the centralized model of the past was not very effective. Under this model the MOE put significant funding into key schools and universities, which mainly benefited the urban areas and provided greater resources to attract and support students. The new decentralization plan shifts funding to the rural areas. Approximately 80% of the people live in China’s rural areas but only 35% of college students come from these regions. Another key component of the centralized model is the national examination system, essentially a selection mechanism for distinguishing between people. The results of the national examination have traditionally been used to rank students, schools and universities. He is concerned that the U.S. seems to be headed down this path, which the Chinese are now moving away from.

In a wide ranging discussion, the study tour participants asked why several Chinese educators seem to follow a circuitous path, often focusing on the past, in responding to questions. Dr. Zhao commented that the Chinese like to refer to their past and he suggested that this is rooted in the Confucius culture, which is very hierarchical. In this culture it is very important to show people your place in society, your cultural roots and your family web. There is renewed interest today in the teachings and philosophy of Confucius. He noted that China is building new colleges to explore how the teachings of Confucius apply to today’s business environment, and if the Communists can’t get rid of Confucius’s ideas, nothing can. The Confucius philosophy suggests that government should rule in a more harmonious way, and China’s current leaders seem to be adapting and integrating these thoughts.

Another question drew some parallels between China and Brazil, both with rapidly growing economies and both experiencing a gap between the rich and poor. How is China addressing the growing income gap? The new government is attempting to address the problem through several policies. These include waiving taxes for farmers and trying to make them more self-sustainable on their own farms. In education, strategies include requiring six top teacher colleges to offer free tuition for students who are willing to teach in the countryside, and to provide rewards for teachers who are willing to move to the rural areas. Tuition free education and textbooks are available in the rural regions and new investments in technology are being made to provide distance education programs. The goal is to ensure that every child has access to the education system, whether in an urban or rural area. Another strategy is to encourage entrepreneurship. China has created several special economic zones to encourage high technology development and exports. Taxes are being waived in these special economic zones as incentives for business development.

In response to a question on the need for skilled workers, Professor Zhao noted that China has a lot of college graduates but it lacks skilled workers and qualified management level engineers. The centralized education system has produced students that are good at book learning but many college graduates lack practical knowledge and problem solving skills. There are also problems with students trained in vocational-technical programs. Some of these challenges are being addressed through special factory training programs that are connected to rural villages and family units. These programs are designed to train and hire large numbers of workers from a single village to be relocated to another region to work in a production facility. This strategy is designed to maintain community and family ties and provide another mechanism for transferring family income into the poor rural areas.

He observed that economic development in China is not going to crash, despite several dire predictions. China has an underground economy that is very strong and vibrant. It is a Communist country with a split personality, a nation trying to co-exist as both very traditional and very modern. Particularly in the area of education, the political reforms are moving China from a highly centralized system to a decentralized system with greater decision-making and control at the local and regional levels.

He suggested that as the delegation members return to the U.S. they should be aware of a growing anti-foreign phobia that is very much alive. The U.S. has assumed a protectionist mode. Michigan, not unlike China, is struggling to hold on to elements of the past. Dr. Zhao observed that some states are moving quickly to create new opportunities to build international partnerships between schools and colleges. He urged the delegation members to make presentations in schools, write an op-ed piece, and meet with local chambers of commerce and other community groups to help people understand what globalization really means. He recommended that schools organize international study tours, create teacher exchanges and provide opportunities for students to attend a summer camp to study a second language. The advantages of learning a second language include obtaining a different perspective on another culture, understanding cultural nuance in a business situation or negotiation, getting a different story from a newspaper or finding employment opportunities as a “cross cultural” ambassador.

Saturday, October 27, 2007

The group visited the Shanghai Municipal Planning Authority Exposition and viewed the scale model depiction of the city’s current and future development. The group then moved on to the Shanghai Museum of Chinese Art and Culture and toured the extensive exhibits and galleries. In the afternoon the group visited the Yu Gardens and the surrounding shopping areas.

Sunday, October 28, 2007

The MSU-China International Study Tour delegates departed Shanghai via Pudong International Airport and returned to the United States. A few of the study tour members remained in China for additional travel and study experiences.

Next Steps

The participants in the October 2007 EPFP/MSU-China International Study Tour have committed to exploring steps to support future partnership opportunities with Chinese schools and educators. The delegation members expressed a strong desire to collaborate with education organizations in China. The US-China Center for Research on Educational Excellence and the MSU Office of K-12 Outreach have created a Web site that will serve as an information resource and link for past and future international study tour participants. Participants are encouraged to send pictures and other resource materials to be posted on the Web site at <http://china-us.us/studytours/>

Report of the October 2007

EPFP MSU-China International Study Tour

Prepared by Dan Schultz, Study Tour Co-Leader

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