



The "*Hot Topics in US-China Education*" is a free, monthly email service that watches for "what is hot" in K-12 US and Chinese education. This service targets educators, administrators, researchers, and parents interested in issues of excellence in education in the US and China. The articles presented in this listserv are organized according to the following five dimensions of education: 1) Teachers and Teaching, 2) Learners and Learning, 3) Leaders and Leadership, 4) Curriculum, and 5) Family and Community. Under each category, you can access the full story by clicking on the story title.

*Hot Topics* is sponsored by the **US-China Center for Research on Educational Excellence** at Michigan State University. It is our firm policy never to rent, loan, or sell our subscriber list to any other organizations, groups, or individuals. The subscription will be emailed every other Friday to subscribers. We welcome suggestions and requests for additional information. Please visit us on the web at <http://www.china-us.us> .

---

**October, 2006**

## **I. Teachers and Teaching**

### **1. [University to pick future teachers through interviews](#)**

*Thursday, October 26, 2006, from Xinhua Net*

In order to train students who really want to become teachers, East China Normal University (ECNU) will begin recruiting education majors next year based on personal interviews instead of on scores from the national college entrance exam, school officials said Wednesday. The university will recruit 200 students next year through the pilot admission plan, making it the third university, following Fudan and Jiao Tong, to accept students without looking at exam scores. High school graduates who are interested in teaching jobs are eligible to apply for the teacher training courses. Applicants will be selected on the basis of interviews to evaluate communication skills and other abilities necessary to become a good teacher. The country's existing teacher enrollment policy relies solely on national college entrance exam scores. That system encourages many students who did well on the exam but aren't interested in becoming teachers to enroll in education programs, said Wang Jianpan, an ECNU professor. The school said a large number of education students apply to change their majors at the end of the first year, and many graduates end up taking office jobs instead of teaching positions.

### **2. [Money starts flowing in teacher bonus program](#)**

*Monday, October 23, 2006, from CNN*

In the closing weeks of the fall campaign, the Bush administration is handing out money for teachers who raise student test scores, the first federal effort to reward classroom

performance with bonuses. The 16 grants total \$42 million and cover many states. The government has announced only the first grant, \$5.5 million for Ohio, where Education Secretary Margaret Spellings was making the presentation Monday. The department will release the remaining grants in the coming weeks, right before the Nov. 7 elections. In Ohio in particular, the GOP could trumpet the news of money for the state education department. The \$5.5 million will be shared by schools in Cleveland, Cincinnati, Columbus and Toledo. Using the old-fashioned incentive of cash, President Bush's program encourages schools to set up pay scales that reward some teachers and principals more than others. Those rewards are to be based mainly on test scores, but also on classroom evaluations during the year. The grants are also aimed at luring teachers into math, science and other core fields. Teachers normally are paid based on their years of experience and their education. Yet more school districts are experimenting with merit pay, and now the federal government is, too. It is not always popular. Teachers' unions generally oppose pay-for-performance plans, saying they do not fairly measure quality and it does nothing to raise base teacher pay. When done in isolation, performance pay "have very little chance of having impact," said Rob Weil, deputy director of educational issues for the American Federation of Teachers.

## **II. Learners and Learning**

### **1. [More Chinese students studying overseas](#)**

*Monday, October 16, 2006, from Xinhua Net*

With more visas granted and application processes streamlined, more and more Chinese students are studying abroad in Great Britain and the United States. Figures were released over the weekend at the China Education Expo 2006, which attracted more than 6,000 visitors and 450 overseas schools from 30 countries and regions. Between January and September the British Embassy stamped 18,000 Chinese student visas. Accounting for 90 percent of visas authorized to students, Britain remains the top destination for Chinese applicants. Besides the thousands of students studying in Britain and New Zealand, the number of applicants wishing to study in the US has also tripled, thanks to the US Embassy relaxing its F1 visa rate to 95 percent in the first eight months. Meanwhile non-English speaking countries are also attracting more students. Italy plans to accommodate 2,000 Chinese students this year 10 times last year's number, while the Republic of Korea intends to recruit more than 1,000, 25 percent more than last year. The hot subjects for overseas study include information technology, engineering, accounting, international communications, logistics and hotel management.

### **2. [Study: Expectations matter when it comes to math](#)**

*Friday, October 20, 2006, from CNN*

Telling women they can't do well in math may turn out be a self-fulfilling statement. In tests conducted in Canada, women who were told that men and women do math equally well did much better than women who were told there is a genetic difference in math ability. Women who heard there were differences caused by environment—such as math teachers giving more attention to boys—outperformed those who were simply reminded they were females. The women who did better in the tests got nearly twice as many right answers as those in the other groups, explained Steven J. Heine, a psychology professor at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. Expectations, it turns out, really do make a difference. The math study is the latest since Harvard University's president ignited controversy last year by suggesting that innate gender differences may partly explain why fewer women than men reach top university science jobs. The comment

eventually cost him his job. Heine and doctoral student Ilan Dar-Nimrod wanted to see how people are affected by stereotypes about themselves. They divided more than 220 women into four groups and administered math and reading comprehension tests between 2003 and 2006. Their results are reported in Friday's issue of the journal *Science*. It's a process psychologists call a stereotype threat, Heine explained. "If a member of a group for which there is a negative stereotype is in a position to test the stereotype, they are likely to choke under the pressure."

### **III. Leaders and Leadership**

#### **1. [SCO to enhance education cooperation](#)**

*Wednesday, October 18, 2006 from Xinhua Net*

On Wednesday, the education ministers of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) decided to enhance multilateral and mutual beneficial cooperation in education. At a meeting held in Beijing, the education ministers agreed to set up a regular expert team, whose role is to draft documents for the acknowledgement of education certificates and educational systems among the member countries. The SCO was established in 2001 in Shanghai. Its members include China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The SCO member countries have conducted cooperation in security, economic, trade, cultural, military and judicial fields.

#### **2. [Beijing to monitor students' risk behaviors](#)**

*Saturday, October 14, 2006 from Xinhua Net*

Beijing health and education authorities plan to monitor the risk behavior of students in the hope of reducing violence, unprotected sex and Internet and drug addiction. The urban youth risk behavior monitoring plan will target 10 to 24-year-old students in elementary school and universities, the Beijing News reported Saturday. The move is part of the city's five-year plan to improve campus disease prevention and the physical and mental health of students, the paper said, adding that details of how the students will be monitored have not been fully developed. Previously regular anonymous surveys were used to monitor trends in risk behavior of students. By monitoring the students, the health and education authorities will learn more about the spread of campus risk behavior and work out better prevention schemes, the paper said.

#### **3. [Ohio court rules on publicly funded charter schools](#)**

*Wednesday, October 25, 2006 from CNN*

In a narrowly divided opinion, the Ohio Supreme Court ruled that publicly funded, privately operated charter schools are constitutional. The 4-3 decision was a blow to a coalition of citizen groups, teachers' unions, education associations and school boards led by the Ohio Parent Teacher Association (PTA). The court upheld the state Legislature's ability to create and to give money to common institutions of learning, even if they are not all the same. But in a dissent, Justice Alice Robie Resnick argued that the Ohio Community Schools Act violates the Ohio Constitution because it "produces a hodgepodge of uncommon schools financed by the state." She said that rather than adding to the traditional school system, the charter school legislation has created a situation in which "an assemblage of divergent and deregulated privately owned and managed community schools competes against public schools for public funds." Teachers' unions, later joined by the other groups, sued Ohio in 2001 over the state's 1998 charter school law, under which the alternative schools have grown from 15 in 1998 to 250 last year. As the movement has grown, criticism has intensified, particularly over charter school students' lagging standardized test scores. Ohio Federation of Teachers union President

Tom Mooney said the groups behind the lawsuit are concerned about charter schools' lagging academic showings, financial scandals and unaccountability to the public. He said a second court case, involving specific alleged violations of state law by charter school operators is pending in a lower court. "Constitutional or not, this thing is clearly out of control. The taxpayers have lost control of over half a billion of their tax dollars," he said.

#### **IV. Curriculum**

##### **[1. New Chinese language test to start in November](#)**

*Sunday, October 22, 2006 from Xinhua Net*

A new language test for Chinese learners, for whom Mandarin is not their native language, will begin in November. Registration for the "C. Test", aimed at non-Chinese and ethnic minority groups in China, will take place between October 24 and 31. The test, devised by the Beijing Language and Culture University, is different to the current Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi (HSK) test which focuses more on listening comprehension rather than grammar and reading. The examinee will receive a certificate with a score and level, together with a report on his or her Chinese language skills. Trial runs of the C. Test were launched in China and Japan in July and attracted 1,150 participants from 17 countries and regions. The first official C. Test exam is on Nov. 19. There will be four tests a year, but the exact dates are undecided.

##### **[2. Not playing around: Scientists say video games can reshape education](#)**

*Tuesday, October 17, 2006, from CNN*

Scientists call it the next great discovery, a way to captivate students so much they will spend hours learning on their own. It's the new vision of video games. The Federation of American Scientists—which typically weighs in on matters of nuclear weaponry and government secrecy—declared Tuesday that video games can redefine education. Capping a year of study, the group called for federal research into how the addictive pizzazz of video games can be converted into serious learning tools for schools. The theory is that games teach skills that employers want: analytical thinking, team building, multitasking and problem-solving under duress. Unlike humans, the games never lose patience. And they are second nature to many kids. The idea might stun those who consider games to be the symbol of teenage sloth. Yet this is not about virtual football or skateboarding. Games would have to be created and evaluated with the goal of raising achievement, said federation president Henry Kelly. The scientific group called for action from the business and academic communities, too.

##### **[3. Grammar-grind returns to U.S. schools](#)**

*Monday, October 23, 2006 from Political Gateway*

According to The Washington Post, renewed U.S. student interest in studying grammar has caused many young teachers to return to class to learn it themselves. Changes to the SAT college entrance exam in 2005 include a writing section that has renewed students' desire to gain an upper hand with proper grammar, which pleases hard-line grammarian Mike Greiner, who teaches Advanced Placement students at Westfield High School in Chantilly, Virginia. "Other teachers in this county say, 'Fix the writing, and the grammar will come along.' Not me," Greiner told the Post. However, many high school teachers are unprepared themselves, having gone through classes in the grammarless 1970's, the newspaper said. Amy Benjamin, who presides over the Assembly for the Teaching of English Grammar, told the Post it's time to close the linguistic gap.

#### **V. Family and Community**

1. [NFL launches \\$1.5 million school campaign to get kids active](#)

*Monday, October 18, 2006 from CNN*

The National Football League has joined the fight against childhood obesity with a campaign that goes beyond gym class and aims to get kids out of their chairs in the classroom. The action was part of the \$1.5 million "What Moves U" campaign funded by the NFL and designed with the help of the American Heart Association to address the decline of physical education in schools. Some 25,000 middle schools that are participating in the nationwide effort will get lesson plans intended to broaden physical activity in schools. A language arts lesson has students create and perform a rap that demonstrates action verbs. A science lesson has kids play scooter tag, with one group of students representing cholesterol and another representing healthy hearts. There will also be print and broadcast public service announcements and a Web site that will prod kids to get up out of their chairs after 10 minutes, said David Krichavsky, the NFL's director of community affairs. Charlene Burgeson, executive director of the National Association for Sport and Physical Education, said youngsters should get at least 60 minutes of physical activity a day, a level achieved by only 36 percent of high school students.

2. [China names 556 Olympic education model schools](#)

*Thursday, October 19, 2006, from Xinhua Net*

China has named a total of 556 elementary and secondary schools across the country as Olympic Education Model Schools in an effort to promote the Olympic Movement among its 400 million youngsters. A ceremony was held Wednesday in Qingdao, a port city in eastern China's Shandong province and a co-host city of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games, to announce the Education Ministry's decision to award the name-plates to 356 schools, in addition to the 200 schools in Beijing which were recognized as Olympic Education Model School in December last year and June this year. The 556 schools, 404 secondary and 152 elementary, include schools for special education, sports, for students of ethnic groups, students from other countries and vocational education. One of the priorities of the preparatory work of Beijing 2008 Olympics and Paralympics is to carry out Olympic education among teenagers, advocate the Olympic spirit, widespread Olympic knowledge and promote physical training of school children.

-----  
**\*\*UPDATE OR ADD A SUBSCRIPTION\*\***

If you would like to sign up for this free service and receive *Hot Topics in US-China Education*, simply register with us. [\[Register\]](#)

*Note: If you cannot see the links or images in this e-mail, register to receive future e-mails in text format only.*

The Center wants you to receive *Hot Topics* at your preferred e-mail address. Please notify us if your e-mail address has changed. Send your name and new e-mail address to [cnus@msu.edu](mailto:cnus@msu.edu). Be sure to let us know your old e-mail address so we can remove it from our list. We also welcome new subscribers. Feel free to forward this subscription information to others.

*Hot Topics is produced by the US-China Center for Research on Educational Excellence which is funded by the Sun Wah Education Foundation.*