



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.

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**August, 2008**

## **I. Teachers and Teaching**

### **[Kids will learn math through art](#)**

*August 21, 2008 from Salt Lake Tribune*

What do fractions and times tables have in common with theater and dance? Students at West Jordan's Copper Canyon Elementary - and another 49 Utah schools - are about to find out. Starting this year, 50 schools will have arts specialists on staff thanks to a four-year grant provided by philanthropist Beverly Taylor Sorenson. The specialists - highly trained and experienced educators with college degrees in teaching and their art specialty - will integrate arts into subjects such as history, science, and even math.

### [Teacher BONUS Shock](#)

*August 29, 2008 from New York Post*

In a surprise move, staffers at schools eligible to earn extra cash this year based on student achievement have chosen to base bonuses on each teacher's merit rather than pay them all the same amount. In roughly 40 schools out of 205 participating in the first-year bonus program, teachers will be paid for their contribution to their students' success, a merit-pay approach Schools Chancellor Joel Klein has advocated but the teachers union has slammed. Despite having the option of splitting the bonus money equally among staffers so each would get \$3,000, a four-person committee at PS 132 in The Bronx chose to split it unevenly, ranging from \$200 to \$5,000, according to Principal Anissa Chalmers.

## **II. Learners and Learning**

### [Class of 2008 Matches '07 on the SAT](#)

*August 26, 2008 from The New York Times*

After two years of slight declines, SAT scores held steady this year, according to a report released Tuesday by the College Board, the nonprofit organization that owns the exam. The average scores for the three sections of the exam were identical for the classes of 2007 and 2008: 502 in the critical-reading section, 515 in mathematics, and 494 in writing. Scores for each section range from 200 to 800. The average composite score, on a scale of 600 to 2400, was 1511 for both classes. The number of test takers was more than 1.5 million, an 8 percent increase from five years ago and a 29.5 percent increase from 10 years ago. While girls continued to narrow the gender gap in math, their average score was still 33 points lower than the score for boys, which was 533.

### [Pupils in quake-hit school start new semester](#)

*August 27, 2008 from Chongqing News Net*

Pupils attend class at Yinxiu Primary School in Yinxiu Town of southwest China's Sichuan Province on Aug. 26, 2008. Some 132 pupils of the school surviving the May 12 devastating earthquake started their new semester Tuesday afternoon. Among 473 students of the school, 222 of them lost their lives in the quake and three others were missing. And the school also lost 20 of its 47 teachers in the quake.

### [SAT scores reveal disturbing trend](#)

*August 28, 2008 from Los Angeles Daily News*

Hidden within the positive statistic showing a 5 percent rise in the number of California high school students taking the SAT in 2008 is a disturbing trend. While more white and Asian students are taking the SAT and scoring above 500 on each of the college preparatory test's three parts, the gap in scores is widening between them and African-American and Latino students. New numbers released Tuesday by the California Department of Education show Asian students scored an average of 514 in writing, white students scored 537, while African-American students averaged 436 and Latinos

444. The gap is pretty much the same for the critical reading subtest. In this category, black and Latino students were about 100 points or more behind their Asian and white counterparts.

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

#### **[Free schooling for migrant kids](#)**

*August 27, 2008 from [www.chinaview.cn](http://www.chinaview.cn)*

Children of migrant workers will have the same education opportunities as their urban counterparts before the end of this year, the Ministry of Education (MOE) said yesterday. "The central government will allocate funds to local education departments sufficient to cover extra education expenses in accordance with the number of migrant children they accept," the ministry said on its website. Fund allocations were previously based on numbers of registered local students, and excluded the children of migrant workers. The ministry is now drafting policies that provide special bonuses to local education departments that accept non-local children.

#### **[China's education ministry opens hotline for poor college students](#)**

*August 16, 2008 from [www.chinaview.cn](http://www.chinaview.cn)*

China's education watchdog has opened a 24-hour hotline for students who want to go to university but cannot afford the tuition fees. The hotline would be operated from Friday to Sept. 15, the Ministry of Education said on its website. Parents and students can ring in to learn about the country's financial aid programs targeted at college freshmen with financial difficulties and report universities which failed to implement these programs, according to the ministry. The ministry pledged earlier this year that the government would ensure no students drop out of colleges or universities because of poverty. Every public college and university has opened a "green passage" to let poverty-stricken first years enroll and begin their studies before paying tuition fees.

### **IV. Curriculum**

#### **[Spare the child](#)**

#### **[Excessive homework assignments don't deepen or enrich anyone's education](#)**

*August, 26, 2008 from [Houston Chronicle](#)*

According to the Australian newspaper *The Age*, homework resentment might have reached its peak in 1887, when "a Texas student about to be whipped for refusing to do homework brought out a butcher's knife and stabbed his teacher in the leg." A judge was unsympathetic to the family lawyer, who declared homework eroded personal liberty, already under assault when school itself was made mandatory. But conflict over homework still simmers. As the number of homework hours has vaulted, school districts and families are calling for the topic to be revisited — calmly. This makes sense. Too many schools pile on homework, just to seem rigorous, or force it on children too young to get anything from it but stress.

#### **[Kindergarteners start off learn two languages](#)**

*August 26, 2008 from San Antonio Express-News*

For some students in Yesenia Del Angel's kindergarten classroom, first day jitters might have been topped Monday by the inability to understand almost anything their new teacher said. Though Del Angel teaches entirely in Spanish, nearly half the students in her class are native English speakers who have little or no experience with the new language. The students receive 90 percent of their instruction in Spanish and 10 percent in English, although the English-portion of the day is with another teacher. Pantomime goes a long way toward understanding — a finger to the lips, for instance, and everyone knows to be quiet — but Del Angel never lapses into English.

## **V. Family and Community**

### **[China to build 30 training bases to meet technician demand](#)**

*August 7, 2008 from [www.chinaview.cn](http://www.chinaview.cn)*

China's Ministry of Education is to set up 30 information technology training bases nationwide to meet the increasing demand for technicians. The move aimed to train more IT specialists to meet the huge demand in a labor market yearning for technicians, Yu Guangming, deputy director of the ministry's Education Management Information Center, said on Thursday. The bases, or vocational schools, would feature programs aimed at helping would-be job seekers to better incorporate knowledge into practical skills, he said. The training bases, which will be jointly sponsored by the center and local institutions of higher learning, would also provide advanced courses for technicians provided they had passed an aptitude test by the school, he noted. The advanced courses included role play in working places, case analysis and job-hunting consultation classes.

### **[A Plan to Test the City's Youngest Pupils](#)**

*August 26, 2008 from The New York Times*

The Bloomberg administration is asking elementary school principals across New York City to give standardized tests in English and math to children as young as kindergarten. In an e-mail message sent on Monday evening, the Education Department's chief accountability officer, James S. Liebman, urged principals to join a yearlong pilot program with five testing options for kindergarten through second grade, including timed paper-and-pencil assessments in which students record answers in booklets for up to 90 minutes, as well as ones in which teachers record observations of individual students on Palm Pilots.

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