



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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## January, 2008

### I. Teachers and Teaching

#### 1. [New York Measuring Teachers by Test Scores](#)

*January 21, 2008 from The New York Times*

New York City has embarked on an ambitious experiment, yet to be announced, in which some 2,500 teachers are being measured on how much their students improve on annual standardized tests. The move is so contentious that principals in some of the 140 schools participating have not told their teachers that they are being scrutinized based on student performance and improvement. While officials say it is too early to determine how they will use the data, which is already being collected, they say it could eventually be used to help make decisions on teacher tenure or as a significant element in performance evaluations and bonuses. And they hold out the possibility that the ratings for individual teachers could be made public.

#### 2. [China sends 76 teachers to Indonesia to teach language](#)

*January 29, 2008 from [www.chinaview.cn](http://www.chinaview.cn)*

A total of 76 Chinese language teachers have been sent to Indonesia to teach

Chinese language at universities and junior high schools, Education and Cultural Ministry said Tuesday. Director at the ministry Fasli Jalal said that the teachers would be placed at 18 provinces and two universities that have Chinese language program, the Indonesian University and the Dharma Persada University at the capital of Jakarta.

"As the demand grows, we have requested 76 teachers this year," he told reporters. He said the sending of the teachers from China has been carried out since 2001.

"Now we must learn Chinese language, as China is a country with high economic growth," said Fasli.

## **II. Learners and Learning**

### **1. [Applications to Colleges Are Breaking Records](#)**

*January 17, 2008 from The New York Times*

Applications to selective colleges and universities are reaching new heights this year, promising another season of high rejection rates and dashed hopes for many more students. Harvard said Wednesday that it had received a record number of applicants — 27,278 — for its next freshman class, a 19 percent increase over last year. Other campuses reporting double-digit increases included the University of Chicago (18 percent), Amherst College (17 percent), Northwestern University (14 percent) and Dartmouth (10 percent). Officials said the trend was a result of demographics, aggressive recruiting, the ease of online applications and more students applying to ever more colleges as a safety net. The swelling population of 18-year-olds is not supposed to peak until 2009, when the largest group of high school seniors in the nation's history, 3.2 million, is to graduate.

### **2. [A change in course for college classes: Students flocking to online study as a flexible way to work for degree](#)**

*January 21, 2008 from Seattle Post-Intelligencer*

Trend toward attending school online continues to escalate. Number in Washington has jumped 75 percent. The trend is being set largely by community colleges, with their propensity for nontraditional students who need an easier, more flexible way to earn degrees. In Seattle, North Seattle Community College is leading the way with a course catalog that lists an increasing number of online options.

### **3. [Postgraduate entrance exam participants drop for 1st time in decade](#)**

*January 19, 2008 from [www.chinaview.cn](http://www.chinaview.cn)*

China's national postgraduate entrance exam began on Saturday with 1.2 million registered participants, 6.3 percent down from 2007 and the first drop in almost a decade. The number of people registering to take the exam soared from 319,000 in 1999 to 1.28 million last year, an average annual increase of 17.2 percent. But the current drop left hints in 2007 that the growth was simply 0.7 percent. Insiders attributed the fall to a changing employment market, the reduced quality of postgraduate education and increasing costs in postgraduate courses.

### III. Leaders and Leadership

#### 1. ['Dashboards' Provide Data On Schools—Reports Designed to Help Parents Rate Performance](#)

*January 14, 2008 from The Washington Post*

U.S. Education Secretary Margaret Spellings has unveiled a new tool to show the public a snapshot of how schools fare in reading and math achievement, graduation rates and participation in challenging Advanced Placement exams. The so-called dashboards, one for each state and the District, aim to distill the overwhelming amount of data on student achievement into a simple format that illustrates troubles and bright spots for schools.

#### 2. [Urban Schools Aiming Higher Than Diploma](#)

*January 17, 2008 from The New York Times*

Many urban schools across the country have begun to launch updated and strengthened efforts in keeping as many students as possible to the college track. Those efforts reflect a growing sense of urgency among educators that the primary goal of many large high schools serving low-income and urban populations — to move students toward graduation — is no longer enough. Now, educators say, even as they struggle to lift dismal high school graduation rates, they must also prepare the students for college, or some form of post-secondary school training, with the skills to succeed. Many urban and low-income districts, which also serve many immigrants, are experimenting with ways to teach more than the basic skills so that their students can not only get to college, but earn college degrees. Some states have begun to strengthen their graduation requirements.

#### 3. [Extending Requirement to Advance in School](#)

*January 18, 2008 from The New York Times*

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg on Thursday unveiled strict new criteria for promotion to high school that could, if current testing patterns hold, put nearly a quarter of New York City's eighth graders in danger of spending an extra year in middle school. The new policy, which Mr. Bloomberg announced in his State of the City address, would require next year's eighth graders to score at a basic level on standardized English and math exams, and to pass their classes in core subject areas in order to be promoted. It is stricter than similar policies that the mayor has put in place in the third, fifth and seventh grades, all in an effort to end the practice of social promotion, in which students are moved ahead despite academic problems.

#### 4. [China vows to further improve higher education](#)

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

China will take further measures to improve higher education to further develop key disciplines, the government said on Wednesday. The representatives heard a report on the development of the "211 project" at a State Council executive meeting presided over by Premier Wen Jiabao. In the early 1990s, China initiated the project for higher education aimed at cultivating talent for national economic

and social development strategies in the 21st century. The project focused on the development of around 100 key universities to cultivate talent adaptable to the new needs of the 21st century. Efforts will be dedicated to further developing the key disciplines and trying to upgrade them to international levels; enhancing the quality of teaching staff and nurturing a group of leading figures in these key discipline; strengthening supervision of academic projects review and intensifying the audit of funds allocated for scientific projects to guarantee the proper use of the funds, etc.

#### **IV. Curriculum**

##### **1. [Students Click, and a Quiz Becomes a Game](#)**

*January 28, 2008 from The New York Times*

A technology known as an audience response system is spreading to public and private schools across the country. Such as that The Great Neck district has been introducing the clickers in an effort to liven up traditional classroom teaching with a more interactive approach. After a successful test at one of its high schools, Great Neck expanded the technology to other schools. The clickers are part of an increasingly popular technology known as an audience response system, which has been used for everything from surveying game show audiences to polling registered voters. That technology is now spreading to public and private schools across the country.

##### **2. [Investigation of Study Programs Widens](#)**

*January 21, 2008 from The New York Times*

An investigation of college study abroad programs by the New York attorney general's office has expanded to include 15 colleges and universities, among them Harvard, Brown and Columbia, a senior lawyer in the office says. Questions about study abroad programs were raised in an article in The New York Times last summer that described how some program providers offer colleges rebates, free and subsidized travel, unpaid seats on advisory boards, help with back-office services, marketing stipends and other benefits. Critics say the arrangements, which are seldom disclosed, can limit students' options and result in higher prices for those seeking international experience.

##### **3. [Distance Education Programs Train Six Mln Chinese](#)**

*January 31, 2008 from [www.chinaview.cn](http://www.chinaview.cn)*

More than six million Chinese have received a college-level education over the past three decades through distance education programs on television, radio and the Internet. Another 40 million have received training via the country's radio and television colleges, according to sources from a distance education symposium held here on Thursday. Since 1978, the Central Radio and Television University and 44 provincial radio and TV colleges have been built. It was in that year China first launched distance learning to provide education opportunities for those who can't go to universities. Such students, those who failed the national entrance exams to universities, could get access to courses broadcast through television and radio nationwide.

## V. **Family and Community**

### 1. **[City Parents Boycotting Added Tests at 2 Schools](#)**

*January 23, 2008 from [The New York Times](#)*

New York City public school students have taken English tests for years. Math tests, too. This year, 10 “diagnostic” tests have been added to the menu in the hope that they will improve results on the real thing. But when parents at two Manhattan elementary schools discovered that their children had been selected to participate in “field tests,” or tests to help the state’s testing company try out questions for future tests, they decided to draw the line. The parents said they were organizing a boycott of the field tests to be given at their children’s schools.

### 2. **[Foster care scheme proving successful](#)**

*January 29, 2008 from [www.chinaview.cn](http://www.chinaview.cn)*

Cao Xin, 11, of Shiquan county, Shaanxi province, has improved in his studies and behavior thanks to his foster parent. In the county, about 48.4 percent of the school children are left alone or in the care of relatives as their parents work in other provinces and regions. In June last year, the county started a foster parents scheme to help these children. Xie Yong, deputy director of Houliu township, is Cao's foster parent. The county has established 15 management centers for the children and has trained more than 2,600 people to be foster parents.

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