



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, 2007

I. Teachers and Teaching

[1. Program that expands teachers' roles linked to higher student achievement](#)

Wednesday, January 31, 2007, from edweek.com

The first broad evaluation of the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) has found teachers in schools that participate in a program that overhauls their professional lives, in part by orienting their pay toward performance, are more likely to significantly raise student achievement than similar teachers in other public schools. The report on the program launched five years ago by the Milken Family Foundation uses teacher-effectiveness data developed by researcher William Sanders, a pioneer in examining the "valued added" by individual teachers. The study itself was undertaken, however, by Lewis C. Solmon and colleagues at the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, which operates TAP. Both the foundation and institute are located in Santa Monica, California.

2. [Why China wants you to learn Chinese](#)

Thursday, January 4, 2007, from the Christian Science Monitor

Many Americans are eager to learn Chinese, but some are concerned about China's motives behind Confucius Institutes. 130 Confucius Institutes (CI) have been established in 50 countries over the past few years. The United States already has a dozen, with several more in the works. Their purpose, say Beijing officials, is to promote the Chinese language and enhance China's relationships around the world. Against the backdrop of China's rise as an economic power, many Americans are eager to learn the language. Yet some are concerned about China's motives. But CI directors say the negative reaction is overblown. "Academic freedom is the most important thing," says Yong Zhao, an American who heads the CI at Michigan State University in East Lansing, Michigan. The concern is "understandable," but the level of concern is "unbelievable," he says. Meanwhile, the institutes are providing a forum for US-China cooperation and may truly enhance relationships—one of Beijing's stated goals.

II. Learners and Learning

1. [Students learning with music](#)

Tuesday, January 30, 2007 from www.cbs3.com

Turning on music may be better than cracking open the books. The Defined Mind CD is a new approach to studying for standardized tests using independent artists record hip hop, pop and rock tunes. Each song is crammed with dozens of S.A.T. vocabulary words. The songs use the words in context, teaching teens the definition. Listening often and doing the workbook exercises makes the information stick. "Because of the repetition, that's going to be imbedded in a longer term," said neurologist Dr. Jay Selman. "Memory and the chances of success are much greater." Dr. Selman said it's easier to remember melodies and lyrics rather than just vocabulary lists.

2. [Rural kids to get free compulsory education](#)

Friday, January 5, 2007, from Xinhua Net

Some 150 million students in rural areas in China will be able to enjoy free compulsory education from 2007. That is to say, on average an elementary school pupil can save up to 140 Yuan every year, a junior high school student up to 180 Yuan, and a boarder might even save 500 Yuan. This project first tested water in western China last spring, benefiting nearly 50 million students. The Ministry of Education will monitor the school fees to ban illicit charges. It is recommended that local governments should provide the needed textbooks and other necessities to the students.

III. Leaders and Leadership

1. [Spellings continues push for No Child renewal](#)

Tuesday, January 30, 2007 from U.S. Department of Education

Education Secretary Margaret Spellings said on January 30 the next phase of the federal No Child Left Behind law should focus on schools that chronically underperform. Schools that don't meet federal standards for multiple years should offer parents more options for transferring their child — such as vouchers to attend private schools — and need to have the resources to attract top teachers, she said. With five years of lessons from the law's pitfalls, the Bush administration has called for changes — including placing more emphasis on science and giving poor students private school vouchers. Spellings said she's optimistic the reauthorization can be completed within a year, though some Democratic lawmakers are balking at some of the Bush administration's proposed changes to the law. The most drastic of those reforms include school restructuring, where a principal starts from scratch and hires a completely new staff. Though some educators are pushing for uniform standards for every state, Spellings reiterated that the Bush administration doesn't support such a measure.

[2. Bush riles democrats with education plan](#)

Thursday, January 25, 2007, from www.postchronicle.com

The Bush administration unveiled proposed educational reforms that would shift students from underperforming schools to private and religious schools. U.S. Education Secretary Margaret Spellings outlined the proposal Wednesday to reporters in a conference call highlighting proposed upgrade vouchers that would average \$4,000 per student from some 1,800 chronically underperforming schools in the country. Democrats were quick to denounce the proposed amendment to U.S. President George Bush's signature "No Child Left Behind" measure, in part because it would allow low-performing schools to override union contracts or become charter schools despite state laws limiting their creation, The Washington Post reported.

3. China spends 2.82% of GDP on education

Monday, January 1, 2007, from Xinhua Net

China has spent 2.82 percent of its annual Gross Domestic Products (GDP) on education, up 0.03 percentage point year on year, according to an official report. "China's total official education fund reached 842 billion Yuan (105.25 billion U.S. dollars) in 2005, up 16 percent over the previous year," showed a recent report on the 2005 national education fund. The report, jointly released by the Ministry of Education, National Bureau of Statistics and the Ministry of Finance, is the latest on the country's use of official educational outlay. The report showed the country's government educational expenditure made up about 14.58 percent of all the state budget expenses, down 0.32 percentage point over the previous year.

IV. Curriculum

1. School to use film clips as textbook

Wednesday, January 24, 2007, from Shenzhendaily.com

Nanshan Foreign Language School plans to introduce the school's primary students to textbooks based on manuscripts of movie clips to help improve their listening and speaking English skills. The new textbooks, possibly the first of their kind, will be ready for use in the new school year in September, 2007. The textbooks, which will be in line with students' English learning habits and their psychological growth, will greatly enrich the school's teaching activities and arouse students' interest in English learning. Through years of practice, the school has accumulated sufficient manuscripts of 14 classic movies, which are funny in content, easy to understand and standard in language. The manuscripts will be used for compiling the textbooks which will be gradually introduced to its middle and high school departments.

2. [Advanced placement courses backed Students fare better in college, studies conclude](#)

Wednesday, January 31, 2007, from Washington Post

In the midst of a national debate over whether Advanced Placement courses place too much pressure on high school students, a team of Texas researchers has concluded that the difficult courses and three-hour exams are worth it. The largest study ever on the impact of advanced placement courses on college success looked at 222,289 students from all backgrounds attending Texas universities. The researchers said they found strong evidence of benefits to students who participate in both advanced placement courses and exams in terms of higher grade point averages, credit hours earned, and four-year graduation rates.

V. Family and Community

1. [Panel delays approval of new student testing program](#)

Tuesday, January 30, 2007 from the Associated Press

A legislative panel has withheld approval of a \$2.6 million contract that would blend two standardized tests for students in grades three through eight. The Performance Evaluation and Expenditure Review Subcommittee of the legislative Joint Budget Committee is to consider the contract again Thursday. The proposed contract between the Arkansas Department of Education and Harcourt Assessment of San Antonio for testing that would start next school year. The contract needed six votes to get out of committee and fell two short. In March, the Arkansas Board of Education voted 5-4 to combine the state Benchmark Exams in math and literacy with a nationally standardized test. At present, almost all of the state's 450,000 students take either the Benchmark tests or the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, or both, almost every year. The tests each take three or four days, and teachers and parents say the testing absorbs too much classroom time.

2. [Sino-UK education cooperation reaches new high](#)

Friday, January 26, 2007, from Xinhua Net

Sino-UK education exchanges and cooperation reached a new high in 2006 with the Second Sino-UK Education Summit held in London last April with a series of agreements signed, a senior Chinese Embassy official said here on 25th of January. The agreements signed between the two countries included those on scholarship of excellence, the internship of Chinese students in the UK vocational and technical education cooperation. Over 50 Chinese education delegations visited the UK, learning the mechanisms of the UK in facilitating education development, with all these benefiting China in developing its own education. With joint efforts, Chinese language teaching has reached a new stage with so far seven Confucius Institutes having been set in the UK. At the same time, proactive measures have been taken to encourage bilateral exchanges with special measures taken by the UK government to encourage UK students to pursue study abroad which has resulted 1,400 UK students pursuing study in China. In 2007 the two sides will hold the third education summit meeting in Beijing that will explore the pilot scheme of setting up joint-research fund programs and discuss the feasibility of credit transfer program between Sino-UK universities. In regards to Chinese language teaching and culture, the opening of several more Confucius Institutes will be explored, including one with Cambridge University. Likewise, UK schools are encouraged to start Chinese language teaching. The Chinese side will invite 150 headmasters and local education officials to visit China and 600 pupils to spend summer camps in China.

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