



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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## November, 2007

### I. **Teachers and Teaching**

#### 1. **[New Class\(room\) War: Teacher vs. Technology](#)**

*November 7, 2007 from The New York Times*

All the advances schools and colleges have made to supposedly enhance learning supplying students with laptops, equipping computer labs, creating wireless networks have instead enabled distraction. No a small proportion of teachers have been persisting a battle for the control of classroom against mobile and internet technologies. The battle is tough and apparently teachers are losing their territory.

#### 2. **[Boosting ranks of teachers—Panel looks at ways to address critical shortage of educators](#)**

*Nov. 11, 2007 from The Deseret Morning News*

Utah legislators are targeting the state's critical shortage of teachers — and the related topic of improving teacher pay — with new proposals aimed at attracting and retaining educators. The Legislature's Subcommittee on Teacher Shortages, Quality and Compensation, formed after lawmakers received a report from the K-16 Alliance "firing a flare" of emergency that Utah is experiencing a severe

teacher shortage, is drafting several measures to deal with the problem. Among the proposals, including:

- ♦ Streamlining re-licensure for teachers.
- ♦ Creating scholarships to draw people into teacher programs at the state's colleges and universities.
- ♦ Encouraging school districts to go on a year-round track to boost teachers' income.
- ♦ Funneling state funds directly to teachers in areas of critical need, such as the sciences.
- ♦ And reconsidering the controversial topic of "merit pay."

## **II. Learners and Learning**

### **1. [Bad Behavior Does Not Doom Pupils, Studies Say](#)**

*November 13, 2007 from The New York Times*

Educators and psychologists have long feared that children entering school with behavior problems were doomed to fall behind in the upper grades. But two new studies suggest that those fears are exaggerated. One concluded that kindergartners who are identified as troubled do as well academically as their peers in elementary school. The other found that children with attention deficit disorders suffer primarily from a delay in brain development, not from a deficit or flaw. Experts say the findings of the two studies could change the way scientists, teachers and parents understand and manage children who are disruptive or emotionally withdrawn in the early years of school. The studies might even prompt a reassessment of the possible causes of disruptive behavior in some children.

### **2. [Study Compares States' Math and Science Scores With Other Countries'](#)**

*November 14, 2007 from The New York Times*

A new study has both good and bad news about how American students perform on math and science tests in comparison to students in other countries. American students even in low-performing states like Alabama do better on math and science tests than students in most foreign countries, including Italy and Norway. The bad news is that students in Singapore and several other Asian countries significantly outperform American students, even those in high-achieving states like Massachusetts.

### **3. [China's 9-year compulsory education to cover most of western areas](#)**

*November 27, 2007 from [www.chinaview.cn](http://www.chinaview.cn)*

A total of 98 percent of children in China's 410 poorest western counties will receive nine-year compulsory education by the year end, according to a four-year national plan on promoting compulsory education. Up to now, the nine-year compulsory education, including six years in elementary school and three years in junior high school, has covered 368 out of the 410 poorest western counties and the other 42 counties have made elementary schooling from first to sixth grade available for children.

### III. Leaders and Leadership

#### 1. [For a Key Education Law, Reauthorization Stalls](#)

*November 6, 2007 from The New York Times*

The leaders of the Senate and House education committees are signaling that time has run out for reauthorizing the No Child Left Behind Act this year, leaving prospects for rewriting it uncertain during the presidential campaign in 2008.

#### 2. [Group Urges Immediate Action to Reduce Size of Classes](#)

*November 28, 2007 from The New York Times*

City school officials could begin reducing class sizes immediately in more than 150 of New York's lowest performing schools, according to a report released yesterday by the Campaign for Fiscal Equity, the advocacy group that successfully sued the state for more money for the public school system. The report said the city was not effectively using either its current budget or classroom space to reduce class sizes significantly in each of the 408 schools identified by the state as needing improvement. The group argues that reducing class sizes should be a top priority for the city's Education Department.

#### 3. [University Students to Have the Shortest Winter Vacation and Longest Summer Vacation Rescheduled for Beijing Olympic](#)

*November 16, 2007 from [www.edu.china.com](http://www.edu.china.com)*

In order to well prepare for the required facilities within campus during the time of 2008 Beijing Olympics, universities in Beijing have rescheduled their calendar, which generated the shortest winter break and longest summer vacation for students. Meanwhile, training for students volunteers in Peking University has already started since this month, and will continue till the opening of the game.

#### 4. [China to exempt all urban students from compulsory education fees](#)

*November 10, 2007 from [www.chinaview.cn](http://www.chinaview.cn)*

China will exempt all students in urban areas from tuition fees in nine-year compulsory education from next year, said Chinese State Councilor Chen Zhili. The State Council has decided to exempt all educational fees of primary and junior high schools from the spring semester of 2008, she said while touring central China's Hubei Province earlier this week. China exempted rural students in western regions from compulsory education fees in 2006 and the exemption policy was expanded to the central and eastern regions in 2007.

### IV. Curriculum

#### 1. [Building a Nation of Polyglots, Starting With the Very Young](#)

*November 14, 2007 from The New York Times*

With an economy that recognizes few geographical borders, more Americans are demanding language instruction earlier in school. Martha Abbott, director of education at the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, said that while there is no reliable data on the trend, her organization keeps learning of more school systems that think paying for elementary school language teachers is

money well invested. The growth in language instruction is also taking place in college. A survey by the Modern Language Association released yesterday found a 13 percent increase in language-course enrollments between 2002 and 2006, with a 127 percent increase in the number of students taking Arabic.

2. **[ESL Courses for a Global Workforce](#)**

*November 12, 2007 from The Washington Post*

School tries new ways to teach growing numbers of immigrants— English class in Montgomery College gives students from different countries a chance to examine cultural identity while improving their English language skills. The class, a combination of the courses American English Language II and Reading for Non-Native Speakers 102, is part of Montgomery College's expanded focus on English as a Second Language. The school is experimenting with new ways to teach its share of the growing population of immigrants enrolling at many of the country's nearly 1,200 community colleges.

V. **Family and Community**

1. **[Reaching Out to Students When They Talk and Text](#)**

*November 13, 2007 from The New York Times*

The Bloomberg administration has launched a program in trying to convince thousands of low-achieving students that succeeding in school is actually cool. The city is planning an intensive campaign that would use cellphones to help motivate students, most of them minorities and from poor families, in two dozen schools. The pilot program will include mentoring and incentives for high performance, like free concerts and sporting events and free minutes and ring tones for their phones. Every student in each of the schools will be given a cellphone. The effort, officials said, will use text messages — drawn up by an advertising agency and sent over the phones — that promote achievement. Schools Chancellor Joel I. Klein said the project was the city's first attempt to bring about change in the culture and behavior of low-performing students after years of efforts focusing on school structure and teaching.

2. **[Parents concerned over early learning](#)**

*November 24, 2007 from [www.chinaview.cn](http://www.chinaview.cn)*

Nearly 90 percent of parents in Shanghai with children under three want better education for their children. And about 70 percent were not satisfied they could get this from the children's grandparents. The findings were reported by officials from Shanghai Population and Family Planning Committee at the Shanghai International Maternity and Baby Care Expo yesterday. And recently city had begun a trial of a community-based early education program last year and, at present, 30 sub-districts were taking part in the scheme.

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