



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, 2008

I. Teachers and Teaching

[Its Native Tongue Facing Extinction, Arapaho Tribe Teaches the Young](#)

October 16, 2008 from The New York Times

More than a half-century later, only about 200 Arapaho speakers are still alive, and tribal leaders at Wind River, Wyoming's only Indian reservation, fear their language will not survive. As part of an intensifying effort to save that language, this tribe of 8,791, known as the Northern Arapaho, recently opened a new school where students will be taught in Arapaho. Elders and educators say they hope it will create a new generation of native speakers.

Ministry: teachers need more protection

October 29, 2008 from www.chinaview.cn

The Ministry of Education has called on local governments, society and educators to play a more active role in protecting the safety of teachers. The call follows the killing of two teachers by students this month in Shanxi and Zhejiang provinces. "The safety of teachers and students are both important," Wang Dinghua, an official of the basic education department of the Ministry of Education, was quoted by Beijing Morning Post as saying yesterday. "All government departments as well as social and educational workers should work together to guarantee the security of teachers," Wang said. He said an amendment last month to the "Professional Ethics of Teachers in Primary and Secondary Schools" only stipulates the protection of students and not teachers, Wang said. Teachers need to use legitimate and appropriate ways to let students see their own flaws, Wang said. "At the same time, it is necessary to improve moral education and psychological counseling in primary and high schools to enhance the mental well-being of students," Wang said.

II. Learners and Learning

Math Skills Suffer in U.S., Study Finds

October 10, 2008 from *The New York Times*

The United States is failing to develop the math skills of both girls and boys, especially among those who could excel at the highest levels, a new study asserts, and girls who do succeed in the field are almost all immigrants or the daughters of immigrants from countries where mathematics is more highly valued. The study suggests that while many girls have exceptional talent in math — the talent to become top math researchers, scientists and engineers — they are rarely identified in the United States. A major reason, according to the study, is that American culture does not highly value talent in math, and so discourages girls — and boys, for that matter — from excelling in the field. The study will be published Friday in Notices of the American Mathematical Society.

Beijing children's eyesight getting worse

October 22, 2008 from www.chinaview.cn

A national standard eye examination has showed that Beijing primary and high school children's vision has been getting generally worse. The Beijing Education Committee sponsored the examinations, which showed the average test results were lower than those from the last examination in 2005, the Beijing-based China Youth Daily reported. Only 10 percent of the tested students had good eyesight, compared with more than 30 percent in 2005. The check covered 1,775 students from 54 classes. They were randomly selected from primary and high schools in 18 districts. According to the test results of the junior high school group, children from the suburban Mentougou District scored an average of four, much lower than 4.8 which was set by optometrists as the minimum standard for good vision. Below four is classed as shortsightedness.

III. Leaders and Leadership

"Education for All" effort fruitful in 30 years

October 09, 2008 from www.chinaview.cn

Of major events in China over the past three decades, most Chinese would list the resumption of National Examination for the Entrance of University as number one. Over the past three decades, millions of students have graduated from colleges of various kinds, to form a high-quality workforce for the country. And China has developed into one of the largest economies in the world. As of 2000, China had reached its goals to ensure nine-year compulsory schooling for children and to eliminate illiteracy among young and middle-aged citizens.

A Plan to Cut the High School Dropout Rate

October 24, 2008 from *The New York Times*

HIGH school graduation rates are universally seen as a barometer of success, or failure, in education. Parents, college admissions officers, even savvy real estate agents rely on that particular statistic to tell them if a school is any good. But just as it takes a village to raise a child, graduation rates in New Jersey and elsewhere have also become a measure of the larger community outside the school and whether its politicians, civic leaders, business executives and even police officers are all doing their job as well.

IV. Curriculum

Video Game Helps Math Students Vanquish an Archfiend: Algebra

October 7, 2008 from *The New York Times*

This fall, New York City is rolling out Dimension M — M stands for math — in 109 middle schools across the five boroughs after trying the game out in two dozen schools, including I.S. 30, last year. Like a modern twist on “Jeopardy!,” the fast-paced video game quizzes students on prealgebra and algebra topics ranging from prime numbers to fractions and complex equations. A correct answer brings 500 or more points, a wrong one as few as 25; the player with the most points wins. (No prizes, just glory.) Whether such educational video games are effective teaching tools is among the key questions behind the new Games for Learning Institute, a \$3 million research effort at New York University that was publicly unveiled on Tuesday. The institute, a partnership between the Microsoft Corporation and six universities (N.Y.U., Columbia, the City University of New York, Dartmouth, Parsons the New School for Design, and the Rochester Institute of Technology) will study games used in middle school classrooms and then create prototypes for new ones.

High Schools Add Electives to Cultivate Interests

October 26, 2008 from *The New York Times*

PELHAM, N.Y. — The students in the jewelry and metalsmithing class at Pelham Memorial High School painstakingly coiled copper and brass wires into necklaces the other morning, while across the hall, the history of rock ‘n’ roll class pondered the

meaning of Don McLean's "American Pie." These are two of the 17 electives added this year to the curriculum in this affluent Westchester County suburb, redefining traditional notions of a college-preparatory education and allowing students to pursue specialized interests that once were relegated to after-school clubs and weekend hobbies. Now, budding musicians take guitar lessons, amateur war historians re-enact military battles, and future engineers build solar-powered cars — all during school hours, and for credit.

V. Family and Community

[Using Video Games as Bait to Hook Readers](#)

October 5, 2008 from The New York Times

Increasingly, authors, teachers, librarians and publishers are embracing this fast-paced, image-laden world in the hope that the games will draw children to reading. Spurred by arguments that video games also may teach a kind of digital literacy that is becoming as important as proficiency in print, libraries are hosting gaming tournaments, while schools are exploring how to incorporate video games in the classroom. In New York, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation is supporting efforts to create a proposed public school that will use principles of game design like instant feedback and graphic imagery to promote learning.

[A Dead Language That's Very Much Alive](#)

October 6, 2008 from The New York Times

The resurgence of a language once rejected as outdated and irrelevant is reflected across the country as Latin is embraced by a new generation of students who seek to increase SAT scores or stand out from their friends, or simply harbor a fascination for the ancient language after reading Harry Potter's Latin-based chanting spells. The number of students in the United States taking the National Latin Exam has risen steadily to more than 134,000 students in each of the past two years, from 124,000 in 2003 and 101,000 in 1998, with large increases in remote parts of the country like New Mexico, Alaska and Vermont. The number of students taking the Advanced Placement test in Latin, meanwhile, has nearly doubled over the past 10 years, to 8,654 in 2007. While Spanish and French still dominate student schedules — and Chinese and Arabic are trendier choices — Latin has quietly flourished in many high-performing suburbs where Latin's virtues are sung by superintendents and principals who took it in their day.

[In Downturn, Families Strain to Pay Tuition](#)

October 16, 2008 from The New York Times

In difficult dinner-table conversations, college students and their parents are revisiting how to pay tuition as personal finances weaken and lenders get tough. With the unemployment rate rising and a recession mentality gripping the country, more families are applying for federal aid for students attending college. College administrators worry that as fresh cracks appear in family finances, they will not have enough aid money to go around, given that their own endowment returns are disappointing, states are making cutbacks and fund-raising will become more difficult.

****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. 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.*