



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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**September, 2008**

## **I. Teachers and Teaching**

### **[State councilor underlines teachers' role in upgrading China's higher education](#)**

September 10, 2008 from [www.chinaview.cn](http://www.chinaview.cn)

State Councilor Liu Yandong on Wednesday called for more teachers of virtue and ability in colleges so as to upgrade China's higher education. Speaking at a ceremony awarding prestigious college teachers, Liu sent her greetings to teachers around the country on China's Teachers' Day, which falls on Wednesday. She said cultivating more teachers of moral integrity, professional excellence, creativity and renovation ability was pivotal for improving the country's high-learning education. She urged colleges, universities and governments of various levels to improve teachers' working and living

conditions and taking measures to inspire their morale and creativity. The teachers should also realize the heavy responsibility on their shoulders and be competent teachers and good models for their students, Liu said.

### [States hire foreign teachers to ease shortages](#)

*September 15, 2008 from USA Today*

The school system in coastal Baldwin County — 60 miles by 25 miles of Alabama farmland framed on two sides by waterfront towns — was short on teachers, especially in courses such as math and science. So short, in fact, that district officials went around the world last year, with expenses paid by a teacher recruiting firm, and brought back Michel Olalo of Manila and 11 other Filipinos to teach along the shores of the Gulf Coast and Mobile Bay and in the communities in between. School administrators throughout the U.S. are plucking from an abundance of skilled international teachers, a burgeoning import that critics call shortsighted but educators here and abroad say meets the needs of students and qualified candidates.

### [More Chinese middle school teachers to teach Chinese in British schools](#)

*September 11, 2008 from [www.chinaview.cn](http://www.chinaview.cn)*

Ninety-five Chinese middle school teachers have been recruited to act as "Chinese-language assistants" to teach Chinese in British secondary schools for one year. The "Chinese Language Assistance" program, jointly launched by China and Britain in 2001, has drawn an increasing number of participants each year. The program aims to promote understanding and communication between the peoples of the two countries through language exchanges, Chinese Ambassador to Britain Fu Ying said at a reception for the Chinese teachers on Wednesday.

## **II. Learners and Learning**

### [At Columbia, Students Mix Studies With Volunteer Work, for Credits](#)

*September 10, 2008 from The New York Times*

When Columbia University engineering students were asked to design a better walker for residents of Harlem's largest nursing home, they were not just helping elderly folks with hip problems have a better life through design — they were working for grades. In an unusually aggressive push of the popular "service learning" concept, 500 engineering students will earn academic credit this year participating in projects around Harlem: designing swings for people in wheelchairs, building an environmentally sustainable greenhouse at a local high school and creating a trash can that can be used by the severely disabled, and others. For the past six years, such service learning has been a graduation requirement for all of Columbia's engineering majors, in what experts say is one of just a handful of programs nationwide to make mandatory what used to be known as volunteerism.

### [Colleges spend billions on remedial classes to prep freshmen](#)

*September 15, 2008 from USA Today*

It's a tough lesson for millions of students just now arriving on campus: even if you have a high school diploma, you may not be ready for college. In fact, a new study calculates, one-third of American college students have to enroll in remedial classes. The bill to colleges and taxpayers for trying to bring them up to speed on material they were supposed to learn in high school comes to between \$2.3 billion and \$2.9 billion annually. The problem of colleges devoting huge amounts of time and money to remediation isn't new, though its scale and cost has been difficult to measure. The latest report gives somewhat larger estimates than some previous studies, though it is not out of line with trends suggested in others, said Hunter Boylan, an expert at Appalachian State University in North Carolina, who was not connected with the report.

### **[China's college graduates face real test in rural villages](#)**

*September 30, 2008 from [www.chinaview.cn](http://www.chinaview.cn)*

Wang He heads to the fields in the morning with the peasants. He knows how to work the crops: watering, fertilizing, weeding. But when he graduated from Beijing University of Agriculture two years ago, the law and politics major had dreamed of becoming a lawyer. He's an assistant to the head of Sanjie Village, Kangzhuang Township in Beijing's Yanqing County, under the Chinese government scheme to employ 100,000 college graduates in villages over five years from 2008. The scheme aims to revitalize rural China by changing the grassroots cadre structure and boosting the government's "new countryside" initiative. It also helps to employ the nation's rising tide of graduates.

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

#### **[China to inject 600 mln yuan to build schools for disabled](#)**

*September 10, 2008 from [www.chinaview.cn](http://www.chinaview.cn)*

China has decided to allocate 600million yuan (about 87.7 million U.S dollars) to build 190 special schools for the disabled this year, an official said here on Wednesday. The fund was ten times the special education subsidy injected in the ten years starting on 1991, according to Sun Xiande, deputy director-general of the China Disabled Persons' Federation. Nearly 20,000 disabled students were studying in higher education institutions by 2007, accounting for less than one thousandth of the country's 82.9 million people with a disability, the federation's figures showed.

#### **[Compulsory education law enforcement comes under inspection](#)**

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

China's top legislative group, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC), will start inspecting how the Compulsory Education Law is being enforced in 14 provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions. Inspections, to start at the end of September, will focus on how local governments allocate money for education in rural areas, the quality of compulsory education and the safety of school buildings, Lu Yongxiang, vice chairman of the NPC Standing Committee said here Tuesday. Similar inspections

have been conducted twice over the past two years. Lawmakers discovered many problems including insufficient funding in mountain regions, poorly equipped rural school houses and underpaid rural teachers.

#### **IV. Curriculum**

##### **[Don't Buy That Textbook, Download It Free](#)**

*September 15, 2008 from The New York Times*

A few college professors have started putting their textbooks online to protest the high prices that textbook publishers can get. For the textbook makers, however, it is a different story. A broader effort to publish free textbooks is called Connexions, which was the brainchild of Richard G. Baraniuk, an engineering professor at Rice University, which has received \$6 million from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. Unlike other projects that share course materials, notably OpenCourseWare at M.I.T., Connexions uses broader Creative Commons license allowing students and teachers to rewrite and edit material as long as the originator is credited.

##### **[A diploma for every student](#)**

*September 28, 2008 from Boston Globe*

THERE ARE conflicting reports about the state of the public education system in Massachusetts. National data indicate that students are achieving at the highest levels in the country, yet the state Department of Education says that one out of every two public schools in the Commonwealth "needs improvement," and 75 percent of the middle schools and 277 public schools need yet-undefined "restructuring" to meet state MCAS standards. The MCAS system is not working. More schools join the "needs improvement" list and more students across the state finish high school without a diploma, not because they have dropped out, but because a single measure of their accomplishment indicates that they do not deserve a diploma, despite their successes in the classroom.

#### **V. Family and Community**

##### **[Nutrition: Soda Ban in Schools Has Little Impact](#)**

*September 22, 2008 from The New York Times*

Does banning soft drink sales in elementary schools reduce how much soda children drink? Somewhat, but not much, a new study finds. Researchers said that when they compared the soft drink consumption of children at schools where it was sold and children at schools where it was not, they did not find a big difference. Only about 4 percent fewer children from the no-soda schools said they did not drink it. Soft drinks were sold at about 40 percent of the 2,300 schools in the surveys. About a quarter of the children at those schools reported consuming them, and about half of what they drank was in school.

##### **[College Panel Calls for Less Focus on SATs](#)**

*September 21, 2008 from The New York Times*

A commission convened by some of the country's most influential college admissions officials is recommending that colleges and universities move away from their reliance on SAT and ACT scores and shift toward admissions exams more closely tied to the high school curriculum and achievement. The commission's report, the culmination of a yearlong study led by William R. Fitzsimmons, the dean of admissions and financial aid at Harvard, comes amid growing concerns that the frenzy over standardized college admissions tests is misshaping secondary education and feeding a billion-dollar test-prep industry that encourages students to try to game the tests.

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