China Education Newsletter

U.S. Consulate General Guangzhou Commercial Section

A quarterly newsletter for American educators interested in China

Edition: January 2014

Chinese Education Reform

With more and more Chinese students studying overseas from middle school level to graduate levels, China's Ministry of Education is making significant changes to the English language education curriculum. What will be the impact on the students you recruit?

The Beijing Municipal Commission of Education announced that as of 2016, the value of scores for subjects like English and Chinese in Beijing's Gaokao will change. The overall weight of the English section will drop from 150 to 100, while the overall weight of Chinese language section will rise from 150 to 180. Other regions, including Jiangsu and Shandong provinces and Shanghai municipality are also preparing Gaokao reform.

Why do different regions have different rules on Gaokao? Even though the Gaokao is the National Higher Education Entrance exam, the content is controlled by the each provincial education Bureau . Beijing will be the first municipality to reform their version of the Gaokao, and I believe, other provinces will follow. These differences in Gaokao contents are often seen as leading to regional biases, particularly against students from poorer provinces. (This is actually one of the main reasons that I decided not to take the Gaokao and opted to study overseas.)

In addition to Gaokao reform, the Beijing Commission of Education decided to delay English-language classes for Beijing primary school students until the third grade. This will take effect as of the 2014 fall semester. Currently, English classes begin in the first grade. China's Ministry of Education claimed that these changes are aimed at reducing students' workloads and the number of subjects in national exams.

Not surprisingly these changes have caused an uproar amongst the Chinese public. Some English teachers support these changes, noting "The change in the exam doesn't mean that English is not important anymore. On the contrary, it means that English teachers now can pay more attention to encouraging students to love English, and lifting their practical ability in using English." Some education agencies are even looking at these changes as new business opportunities. However, some parents are opposed to these changes claiming "Lowering the importance of English has not fixed the fundamental problem of Chinese Higher Education at all".

So, how is this going to impact the students you will be recruiting in the near future? In the short term, there will not be much of an impact, but in my opinion, the weight of the score of English section will not stop students learning English and continuing study overseas. Instead Chinese parents will try different approach to improve children's English like using education agencies. I agree that the fundamental problem of Chinese Higher Education has not changed at all. In fact, children's workload will (unfortunately) not decrease, as parents will still send them to after school "cram schools" to improve their English.

http://edu.people.com.cn/GB/8216/370268/
http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/203691/8461798.html
Photo Source: http://news.xinhuanet.com/edu/2013-10/24/

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Editor's Note

Welcome to Year of the horse. According to the Chinese zodiac, the Horse Year 马年 represents fortune and energy.

Last year, our education team supported more than 50 US education promotion events across South-China –a new record.

The January issue of my newsletter highlights China education reform and what the impact will be on your recruiting. My co-editor also shares some insights on how Chinese high schools in second-tiers cities are still looking for partners.; Finally, tips for school recruiters on how to help sea turtles to find jobs after studying overseas.

We will be back again after the Chinese New Year and I look forward to receiving your feedback on this edition.

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Social Media in China

U.S. Education Weibo

http://weibo.com/useducation

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EVENT

Check out the upcoming events in South China in Spring 2014!
Come and Join us!

Feb 23, 2014
New Oriental Study Fair
Fuzhou
Mar 1, 2014
JJL Study Fair
Guangzhou;
Mar 8, 2014
New Oriental Study Fair
Shenzhen
Mar 15, 2014
EIC Shenzhen Study Fair
Shenzhen
Mar 15, 2014
Shinyway Xiamen Study Fair
Xiamen
Mar 15, 2014
New Oriental Fair
Changsha
Mar 16 2014
New Oriental Study Fair
Wuhan
Mar 16, 2014
EIC Study Fair
Guangzhou
Mar 22, 2014
Shinyway Study Fair
Guangzhou
Mar 30, 2014
CIEET Study Fair
Guangzhou

For more information about the education market in China, to arrange study fairs, briefings, and meetings, or to subscribe to this newsletter, please contact:

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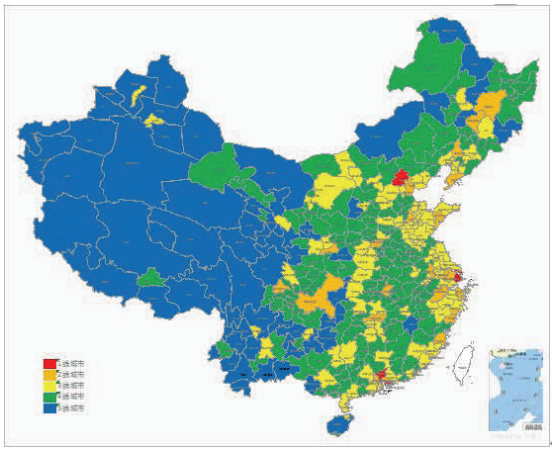
Chinese High schools in Second-tier Cities Still Looking for Partners—by Jay Biggs

In November, I had a fascinating opportunity to meet with representatives from a high school in Nanning that I would like to share. What I found interesting was the stark contrast between the sophistication of the education they provided for their students, and the lack of sophistication in identifying educational opportunities in the U.S. This contrast is a microcosm of the opportunities that abound for recruiting in China's second tier cities.



The Nanning #2 High school is one of the best high schools in Nanning, the capital of Guangxi province. Nanning itself is a second tier city with no real claim to fame. I always ask taxi drivers what the city is famous for - this is the only city where nobody could give me an answer.

Nevertheless, the Nanning #2 High school has a fantastic program for students that want to study abroad. Out of the entire student population of more than 3,000 students, 150 are selected for a 3 year course that teaches intensive English, while introducing U.S. culture. They also have classes geared towards helping students take AP tests following their senior year. On top of this, these students have the opportunity to travel to the U.S. during their sophomore and junior years for summer study programs in the U.S.

The results are impressive. From this program, around half end up studying overseas, most at 2 or 4 year institutions in the U.S. These students are extremely motivated, as they are usually either the first in their family to go to college, or the first one in their families to have an opportunity to study abroad.

Given how sophisticated the curriculum was, I was amazed at how the administrators selected institutions for their students to attend. The summer programs are all coordinated by a community college in Los Angeles, which the Nanning #2 High school staff found online. Similarly, the counselors at the school also basically do random internet searches for U.S. universities to come up with a list of 3 – 4 schools each year that they promote to their students . Granted, they have found a couple of good universities, but the process is decidedly low-tech.

Nanning #2 High school is typical of China's burgeoning efforts to send more and more students to study overseas. Schools and Education Bureaus pour tons of resources into preparing students for opportunities to study abroad. However, the critical infrastructure for helping students find the opportunities that best match their needs/talents is sorely lacking. Our mission is to help bridge this gap, by introducing your institution to kids that have the drive and talent to make a positive impact of your student body.

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How to Help Sea Turtles in Distress?

In China, students returning from having studied aboard are often referred to as 'Sea Turtles'. It is created to rhyme with a Chinese term of the same pronunciation, 'Hai Gui'. There's another term 'Hai Dai', which means seaweed, returning students who have a hard time finding jobs. Currently, more than 72% of overseas Chinese students return to China after finishing education abroad. Will your returning students become '*sea turtles*' or '*seaweed*' once they get back?

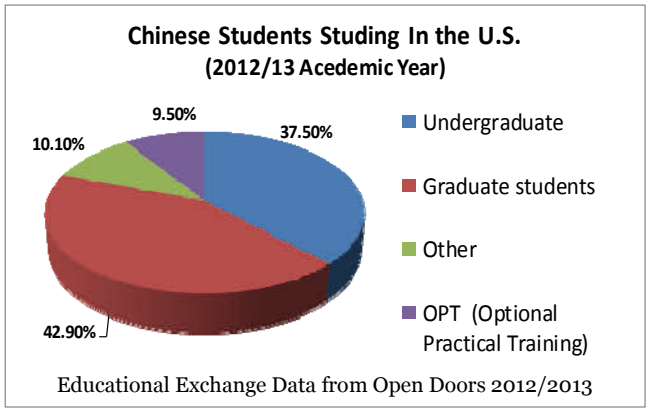
According to an article from China Daily (link below), several studies show that '*sea turtles*' on average now wait longer and find lower level position at a lower salary than local hires. One reason is due to the weakening job market for all graduates. Another reason is that many grads who have spent years aboard find it hard to get reacquainted with the rapidly growing China's domestic market, industries, local consumption patterns, plus social media tools such as Weibo and Weixin. Moreover, these returnees sometimes face difficulties adapting to local business environment. According to China Daily this puts them at a disadvantage in China's economy, where locals are more willing to do whatever needed to seal the deal.

Given that these returning '*sea turtles*' are finding it harder and harder to find jobs, why are students still flocking to the U.S. for an education?

Although the days are gone when a foreign diploma and good English skills were all a returnee needed, U.S. graduates with work experiences can still in finding jobs after returning to China. Understanding the intricacies of doing business in the West, coupled with advanced technology and professional management skills are still a winning combination to most Chinese employers.

Understanding these trends, U.S. institutions that can help students to gain practical professional experience will certainly be attractive to the top tier of Chinese students. So as you recruit Chinese students, it is becoming essential to demonstrate how you can provide students with opportunities to gain real business or professional experience.

http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/language_tips/news/2013-07/09/content_16750828.htm



Data source: INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION