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There are deep cultural differences between Eastern and Western societies regarding learning and development. The notion of whether creativity is learned or not is just one of these. *Cultural Foundations of Learning: East and West* by Jin Li explores some of the differing approaches to learning found in these cultures and concludes with a look at them in the twenty-first century.

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## Editorial

### Partnering in Education

By Laura Coleman, Guest Editor

China's education system has been criticized by education reformers both within and outside China. Chinese parents, increasingly fed up with a system that focuses on rote memorization, are looking for a holistic education which includes character development and extracurricular activities. Cram schools, that prep kids for the "Gao Kao" (the university entrance exam), do not teach students how to think critically.

According to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, only 65 Chinese students studied at American private high schools in the 2005-2006 academic year. By 2010-2011, that number had grown to 6,725. That number increases to 25,880 for the total number of Chinese high school students studying in both public and private schools in 2012. The *Christian Science Monitor* reported that the total number of high school age Chinese studying in the U.S. was 24,000 in 2010 - 2011 with most of them in public high schools. The difference between 2005 and 2010 is a new generation of Chinese parents who have money and an interest in providing an international education for their children. Chinese parents know that single children tend to be spoiled, so they send them abroad to teach them to be independent, make friends with American students, learn to compromise and develop life skills that will better equip them for U.S. universities.



[Joann Pittman](#)

As guest editor of this summer issue of the *ChinaSource Quarterly*, I am excited to share perspectives from people working among Chinese students in varying capacities. This issue includes advice on how to nurture and care for these young students. From a Chinese student who recently attended a U.S. private high school to a Chinese university professor we learn about the needs of students and the challenges Chinese parents face in finding a holistic education for their child. We also hear some cross-cultural observations from a director of a recruiting organization as well as how to care for these students from the perspective of a mentor and high school admissions director. The diverse group of authors in this issue will help us understand how we can better nurture, teach and support Chinese high school age students coming to the U.S. at younger and younger ages.

Jon Keith of WANet describes the developmental opportunities for these students at private high schools. He offers many examples of strengths and some weaknesses in the Chinese education system while promoting his model of 6C's plus leadership as the way forward for success in the future. Keith's hope is that high school leaders, teachers and host families will catch the vision that we can influence one of the largest people groups in the world for good.

Ruth Kuder of Eastern Christian High School shares her learning experiences from admitting students who are equipped to succeed cross-culturally in U.S. high schools to providing for their lodging needs and ESL support. Her valuable advice to other schools is helpful as they seek to provide adequate resources and staff support for this growing population.

What a privilege it is to serve Chinese high school students and their parents as they navigate the cross-cultural challenges of study abroad opportunities. As many of us "ride the third wave" of students coming to the U.S. during their high school years, we need to also be thinking about the effects of taking Chinese youth away from their families and communities at such young ages. My desire is that our readers will reflect deeply and consider how each of us can care for these young people who are leaving their homes and families in the hope of gaining a new way of life.

*Laura Coleman has been working in China for over twenty years in the field of education.*



[Joann Pittman](#)

## Lesson from a Pool in Wenzhou Opportunities for Chinese Students in American High Schools

By Jon Keith

“Wait!” commanded the Chinese teenage boy as he stood and came towards me. I was heading for what I hoped was my daily exercise, a quick swim in the hotel pool, while traveling through China. However, on this particular day in Wenzhou, the young man responsible for guarding the pool clearly wanted to stop me before I jumped in. I glanced his way with a quizzical look before he added, “You must have a swimming cap.” I responded with the typical American response, “Why?” Having obviously studied English, he offered a more extensive explanation, “We don’t want hair in the pool.”

To fully appreciate this story, you must have the whole picture. On top of a nearly 6’4”, slightly over 250 pounds frame, my clean-shaven, bald head makes for a hard-to-miss image, particularly in China. Nevertheless, the absence of head hair apparently did not register with the young man.” So, I repeated my question and quickly got the same answer with even more conviction. I decided to try a universal form of communication practiced during many years of China travel. I pointed directly to my bald head and offered a look that was intended to say, “Does this make any difference?” Our cross-cultural, multidimensional communication effectively ended when he said definitively, “It’s the rule!”

I deferred to the pool standard, grabbed a swimming cap and got my exercise. The end result was he was happy and I guarantee you I left no head hair in the pool. Still, I often wonder if the boy working at the pool will ever grow up to own the hotel. Actually, we know he probably won’t. One of the essential skills of a well-educated individual who becomes a leader or person of significant influence is mastering the ability to think critically and apply important principles to new situations.

The pool experience reminds us that each educational system, and culture for that matter, has its strengths and weaknesses. Some teach us to learn the rules and follow them religiously; others to challenge the norm and ask “Why?” Some require enormous discipline and focus on a prescribed curriculum; others allow for freedom of choice and pursuit of interests. Some require extreme mastery of foundational information; others focus on application.

One of the strengths of the American Christian educational system is the emphasis on the following key attributes: communication, critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, cultural awareness, computer literacy and leadership. WANet, an international student placement service, calls these attributes the “6 C’s plus Leadership.” The young man working at the pool was educated to follow rules but not to think. He does know the end goal—no hair in the pool—but doesn’t know how to apply this principle to a new situation. Without the key attribute of critical thinking, our Chinese teenager may be trapped and destined to remain at his current job indefinitely. Most research tells us that students that possess the “6 C’s plus Leadership” attributes will likely be successful in the twenty-first century.

So, what developmental opportunities exist for international students in Christian high schools in America? I believe that international students, particularly from China, with both the strengths of their home culture and educational system plus the implementing of the “6 C’s plus Leadership” learned in America, will eventually become the leaders of tomorrow in their country. Logically, meshing the strengths of two disciplines should be better than one. I believe deeply that the American Christian school movement has a unique opportunity to invest in the Chinese teenager who can lead one of the most important countries in the world—and our emerging American partner—in world leadership. How then does that young man working at the pool become a leader of tomorrow?

First, we must find a starting point by evaluating the needed areas of growth for the Chinese student’s success. Throughout my varied experiences with Chinese students, I have noticed some very distinct patterns. While the Chinese teenager is often very disciplined, focused and hardworking, the “6 C’s and Leadership” are often missing. Identifying the areas needing improvement gives direction for building change that will greatly supplement the disciplined work ethic.

Developing independence in the American teenager is one of the goals of American parents and teachers. This independence and building of self-sufficiency in daily decisions empower teenagers to challenge themselves in and outside the classroom. The Chinese culture, however, has taught that academic studies (memorizing and reciting on exams) are the most important, and often, the only thing that matters. Frequently, Chinese parents have made most of their child’s daily and life decisions for them. Summer schedules are full of ACT and SAT preparation courses, and often involvement in cocurricular activities is discouraged for fear of cutting into academic study time. Chinese education trains students to memorize, memorize, memorize. Their world is one of preparing for tests, and especially *the* test—the senior year test that determines placement in the Chinese university. If an American university is an option, many Chinese parents determine, or have a great deal of influence on, which one their child will attend. Often, the goal is a famous American university like Harvard, Yale or Stanford with very little tolerance or interest in anything perceived as less distinguished. The pressure for Chinese teenagers to be extremely successful is often enormous.

The American education system promotes the development of social skills, academic responsibility and confidence. Because decision making is done primarily by Chinese parents, students often lack the confidence to assert themselves when stating a position or



Justin Van Dyke

an idea. Now granted, speaking in a second language can minimize one's confidence, but the fact is, most Chinese students do not sound or look prepared to be persuasive. They have not yet been taught to stand with confidence and share their thoughtful opinions and ideas in a convincing fashion. In fact, the most common answer to one of my questions to a Chinese teenager often starts with the word "Maybe..." This indefinite response implies the student might not be sure or know what he/she is talking about. American high schools and quality summer programs can, and do, instill ever-so-valuable confidence. One of my favorite educational experiences is to see young Chinese students gain "their voice." The air of "I'm important, me, yes me" and "I have ideas, good ideas that I want to share with you" is what I love to see.

Confidence also is developed by adapting to a culture that a student has learned to navigate. Recently I conducted an experiment to test the Chinese student's experience with cross-cultural communication and exposure to diversity. Standing in a heavily populated shopping area in Shanghai, I counted seven hundred Chinese people who passed me before I noticed a non-Asian looking person. The second time five hundred. The same experiment in an American shopping mall resulted in every third or fourth person with a non-traditional American appearance (Anglo Saxon, Western European, Hispanic or African American). Even our traditional American appearance has diversity! The non-scientific conclusion: the Chinese teenager has often been raised in a less diverse culture producing less experience addressing new situations or different people groups/cultures. The American Christian high school and community offers enormous opportunities for Chinese teenagers to practice adaptability.

How to best learn about other people and cultures? If only one out of every seven hundred individuals is different in my culture, then there is no substitute for actual interaction in someone else's world. I can read about Chinese culture, but until I am actually pressed into a Chinese elevator or subway, I will really not understand the different cultural standard about personal space. Until I share a dinner in a restaurant in China, I won't really understand how respect is shown in a different culture. Spending time in America gives Chinese students the cultural awareness they may need for greater global understanding and development.

There is probably no better place to learn how to adapt to American culture than living in a family community that emphasizes cooperation, collaboration and leadership. Most Chinese teenagers have obviously been raised in a single-child home which has its own predictable outcomes. The ability to collaborate, share and think from another person's perspective is typically still in the developmental stage. Social skills may be underdeveloped due to a lack of opportunities. With less time spent outside the classroom or away from studying, the Chinese teenager has not had as many different people interactions to give them the ability to discern appropriate social skills. Additionally, many Chinese children have not had the benefit of a father physically present in their lives on a daily basis due to business schedules and work requirements that often take the parent to other cities.

When a Chinese student is in a boarding situation in the U.S., many schools do an outstanding job carefully selecting, training, educating and providing ongoing supervision for this setting. This allows Chinese students access to wonderful experiences. However, one of the enormous, additional benefits a Chinese student can glean from an American educational experience comes from living with a high quality host family. The opportunity to eat dinner with the whole family present (both parents and siblings) on a daily basis and discuss the day's activities and world events is educational; more importantly, it provides for a daily transfer of values. Living in a home instead of a dorm affords homework help and supervision. The student who does not feel well has a mom available. Participating in an active American Christian family life is exciting and nurturing whether it is running to the supermarket together, taking the car in for repair on Saturday morning, catching a movie or attending church on Sunday. Being a part of a big active family not only enhances language ability at a faster pace but develops all kinds of social skills and grows confidence. The daily interaction with an American host mom, dad, brothers and sisters can actually be one of the most important developmental tools for a Chinese student in America.

Students can also be taught to work together. Living with three brothers and sisters for fifteen years is the easy way, but not everyone has that benefit. Studying in community in American schools also creates opportunities, and American teachers incorporate this model of education quite frequently. Requiring students to depend on someone else for part of their results is an important life skill and necessary requirement of adult life. Better to practice and learn now.

I also love to see Chinese students finally realize they are capable of creativity. They don't have to be stymied by roadblocks; they don't have to be limited by the single method of straight ahead, brute force or more effort. Through problem-based learning, students begin to accumulate the tools of imagination. They can be taught the world of problems is waiting to be solved if only they will learn to "think outside the box," to look around the corner and ask, "What if?" Couple this creativity with group dynamics, problem-solving activities and the Chinese student begins to experience synergistic results.

Finally, what about values? Are young people born with the tendency to tell the truth, to share, to think about the needs of others? Anyone who has watched a self-centered young child, or many adults for that matter, knows the answer. To be good is not innate. In fact, history constantly reminds us the tendency of man and child is to lie, steal and be selfish and unkind. Values must be taught and, more importantly, modeled. Development of values takes time, it takes teachable moments and it takes the patience and modeling of quality parents who have had these important values carefully passed on to them. Values also must be taught or reinforced by schools with good values. Christian schools, regardless of one's personal religion, do offer the young student a value education that is both taught and modeled. The partnership of a quality host family with the Christian school has a pronounced capacity to build a value system that empowers students to become respected adults of strong character capable of confidently collaborating with others and becoming leaders in their circles of influence.

What is the opportunity we (teachers, staff, host parents, leaders) in the American Christian high schools have as Chinese students enroll in our schools? We have been invited and entrusted by wise Chinese parents to help finish the construction of what I believe

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## Caring for Chinese Teenagers in American High Schools

Ruth Kuder

As an independent school in the New York metropolitan area, Eastern Christian has experienced significant growth in its Chinese student population. While we have had Korean students for over ten years, our first Chinese student came in 2011; we are finishing the current school year with over thirty. Our experience reflects a national trend.

An increasing number of Chinese students attend school in the United States, and the trend is moving toward doing this at a younger age. What began as interest in graduate school

has moved to college, high school and even middle school education. The number of nonimmigrant students studying in secondary schools in 2014 is 50,526, and almost one-third of these students are from China.<sup>1</sup> Nonimmigrant students, who require F1 visas, usually attend independent schools which have been approved by the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP). As a result, faith-based schools, both Catholic and Protestant, are experiencing significant interest from Chinese applicants.

Schools, many of which are experiencing shrinking enrollment, are drawn to this opportunity for a variety of reasons. Tuition from these students, which in many cases exceeds, often by a significant amount, the tuition from local students, allows some schools to maintain their current programs. For other schools, the increase in tuition provides the opportunity for revenue that can fund additional opportunities for growth.<sup>2</sup> In addition, evangelical Christian schools, even those who limit local candidates to those from believing families, are compelled by the opportunity that Chinese students represent as they consider their mandate to share their faith, particularly with students who have grown up in a society that is not religious. Most independent schools would cite the cross-cultural opportunity represented by international students as an additional advantage for enrolling them.

Given the interest from Chinese students, as well as the compelling reasons for independent schools to consider them as attractive candidates, a situation has developed in which faith-based schools are working very quickly to accommodate the number of students who are interested in enrolling in their schools. Caring for the unique needs of these students must be a priority or both the students and the schools will be unsuccessful in this venture. Students will be defeated by the challenge and will transfer to another school in the hope that it will provide them with a better platform for success. Schools will be discouraged by the amount of time and energy that is required from administrators and teachers in meeting the needs of English language learners who transfer in and out at a high rate from year to year. If high schools are going to open their doors to Chinese students, they need to commit the necessary resources to caring for them. We have learned some valuable lessons that we can share as other schools consider this opportunity.

### Are They Prepared?

Students who are most likely to be successful in an American high school will come equipped with certain skills before they arrive. They need to have the intellectual capacity to learn another language and be intrinsically motivated learners who can tackle hours and hours of learning new content in a second language. They need to be emotionally resilient to handle the stresses of adjusting to a new culture, language and living situation as well as socially competent in order to make the social adjustments necessary to form relationships. Schools that are committed to helping students be successful will need to carefully screen applicants prior to their arrival in order to ensure that they have these basic skills.

Chinese applicants are unfamiliar with the American protocol requiring multiple letters of recommendation and essays. Because of this challenge, they usually hire educational consultants who will assist them in the completion of applications which then reflect the expertise of the consultants rather than the aptitude of the applicants. For this reason, the applications themselves are unreliable as screening tools. While not foolproof, secure standardized tests and face-to-face interviews provide the most accurate picture of a student. Interview services, such as [Vericant](#), have emerged to assist schools with this process. Any school that has found itself with a non-English speaker having an undiagnosed or undisclosed learning, social or emotional issue will soon discover the value of a careful screening process as they attempt to sort out options for a struggling Chinese student who is part way through an academic year.

### Where Will They Live?

One of the most pressing questions for schools who accept international students is the question of housing. There are variations on



Cathy Lagerveld

two main models. Boarding schools are prepared with dormitories and cafeterias. While dormitories provide a stable, structured environment, Chinese students often end up living and studying with other Chinese students; the opportunities to interact with Americans and American culture are limited.

Day schools often establish host family or home-stay programs. In this model, families in the school community provide room and board for students. In order to be successful, host family programs require recruiting, screening, training, supporting and management. Host families will need training on common cultural pitfalls, tips on food preparation for a student with different preferences and guidelines on expectations that help a student be successful. When done well, students can receive exceptional care and also have a rich cultural experience. In addition, language exposure, in a true immersion environment, will accelerate English acquisition.

In our experience at Eastern Christian, the host family model has been a tremendous asset to both the students and the host families. The school community has embraced the opportunity and our students have, with few exceptions, made a good transition to a host family environment. The key has been a dedicated Host Family Coordinator who is available to make placements, conduct interviews, provide support, answer questions, train families and visit homes.

### **How Will They Learn?**

Even strong students, with good learning capability, will come with varying levels of English proficiency. Students, although testing well, may be unintelligible in their social interactions. Conversely, students, who appear fluent in their everyday interactions, may struggle with academic vocabulary and writing.

As schools consider which applicants they will accept, they need to carefully consider their academic program. If they do not offer significant support in their language program and language-based classes, they need to expect a high level of English proficiency in their incoming students. If they do offer support through tiered-ESL instruction to meet the needs of English learners at a variety of stages, they can have more flexibility in the level of English proficiency they accept.

In Christian schools, an annual Bible class is usually a requirement. Chinese students often have little or no background that prepares them for this, particularly in comparison to some of their classmates who have been in Christian school since preschool. Some schools offer a course that provides an overview of the Bible and Christianity. When Chinese parents question this as an academic requirement, I usually remind them that this is an important course, not just because it is the basis of our faith, but because biblical literacy is essential in understanding Western thought.

On the other hand, it is a rare high school math teacher who expresses concern about having Chinese students in the class. For schools that want to keep their students growing as mathematicians, the issue becomes offering math classes that provide adequate challenge. The presence of Chinese students in our math classes has driven us to offer more advanced math electives, and all of our students have benefited from this development.

Chinese students can struggle as they attempt to understand some of the significant differences in an American approach to education. American teachers have different expectations. Students are expected to participate in class, engage in debate and discussion, work collaboratively, think critically and work creatively. We have learned to include these expectations as part of our orientation for students so that they understand the implicit expectations of American classrooms.

Not only do students need to be prepared for the American classroom, teachers and other adults who work with Chinese students need to receive training. We have made it a priority to do continuing professional development for teachers. Topics have included understanding Chinese educational culture, teaching academic vocabulary and strategies for teaching English language learners. Teachers need to feel equipped to meet the unique needs of the Chinese students in their classrooms.

### **How Do We Engage in Community?**

Like most Christian school communities, ours is made up of a dense and rich tapestry of relationships. Students, parents, faculty and staff are connected through ties that have been created through friends, family and church. If Chinese students can be included in these relationships, they will be nourished socially, emotionally and spiritually. Intentionally building relationships in these areas has been a priority for us and a key factor in helping students remain healthy, even when far away from home.

Chinese students studying in American high schools express concern about the difficulty they experience in forming relationships with American friends. Language and cultural barriers are significant. Cafeteria tables with Chinese students eating together are the norm rather than the exception. Thus, schools need to be intentional about the work of building and sustaining cross-cultural relationships. This is particularly challenging since teenagers are teenagers, and learning how to navigate social relationships is part of high school. The most poignant feedback I hear from Chinese students is their desire to make American friends and their frustration in

overcoming the language barrier. We have made some progress in this area by approaching it from two perspectives.

First, we do a unit focused on cross-cultural competency as part of a seminar course for all incoming freshmen. Upper-class international students, many of whom have grown into leadership roles in the school, share their experiences with the class as part of a panel discussion. We then put the American students in the position of being cultural learners. We ask them to research Asian recipes, then, take them to an Asian market. They have to navigate recipes, food labels, unfamiliar ingredients and new dishes. The Asian students become valuable resources in helping their American classmates.

Second, our International Student Life Program includes an American ambassador component. Monthly activities and trips over breaks include both American and international students. These activities have been popular with all students and have helped both groups begin to forge relationships.

Chinese parents can be a mystery to those working with Chinese high school students. Language and time zone challenges make communication very difficult. Christian schools, that have historically served families in close partnerships, can neglect this relationship due to the communication challenges. As our program has matured, we have become more intentional about cultivating these partnerships. We translate key communications that we send via email. Our online grade-book and web site can be translated, albeit imperfectly, into many languages with a click of the button.

Sending school representatives to meet with all new Chinese parents has been the most significant way to form a relationship with families. Parent meetings have been key in helping parents understand the school's mission, their student's progress and the American schooling process. They put a face to the school and create a relationship. The meetings have allowed us to iron out minor misunderstandings before they escalate and address any concerns in the context of the relationship. They also help us begin to manage parents' expectations. While it is possible that their child will gain acceptance to an Ivy League school, it is probable that they will not. Helping parents understand that there are multiple pathways to success in American higher education can take some of the pressure off both parents and students.

### **How Do We Nurture Their Spirits?**

Most Chinese students studying in the United States have limited or no religious background. They are also incredibly receptive to learning more about Christianity. Host families, dorm parents, mentors, classmates, Christian schools and churches all play a significant role in helping them learn more about faith.

Some schools have been able to identify local Christian Chinese partners. In our case, there is an active Chinese church with a Friday night youth group that attracts many of our Chinese students. They eat Chinese food and fellowship with believers. The gospel message that American believers in their community are attempting to communicate with their lives is also communicated clearly, in Chinese, through scripture and teaching.

One of my most memorable experiences with a Chinese student happened after a long Saturday of ice-skating and Christmas shopping in Manhattan. On the bumpy, noisy, school bus ride home, she talked about years of violin lessons and practice in China without any opportunity to perform until her first high school concert in the United States, the significance of her American education, her conversion experience and her desire to share her faith with her family in China.

I also remember a parent meeting that took place in Taipei when a mother, who has three children in our school, shared the story of her daughter's return after her first year as an eighth grader. Her daughter became a believer and shared her story with her mother who then converted and has become an active member of her church. The mother is motivated to keep up her own spiritual growth so that when her daughter returns home they can share what they have each learned in their time apart.

### **Can We Embrace the Opportunity?**

If schools are going to accept Chinese students, meeting their physical, educational, social, emotional and spiritual needs must be the highest priority. Integrity requires that schools commit resources to developing a holistic educational program that will serve these students well. Motivated by a desire to care for international students, as our program has matured, both our school and our students, local and international, have reaped significant benefits. As we have grown in number of students and quality, our international retention rate has gone from about seventy percent to a three year average of ninety-seven percent. Students are happy, and they choose to stay in our school community. Our recruiting efforts have focused on the word-of-mouth opportunities that satisfied parents provide. We now enjoy informal parent groups in first and second-tier Chinese cities. Our applications exceed the number of spots we have available.

The Bible is full of situations in which key historical moments take place at the intersection of language and culture. Abraham and

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## Ministering to Chinese International High Schoolers in the U.S.: Guarding Their Souls

By Lu Chen

A number of high schools across the United States have quietly taken advantage of a growing interest in American education by international students. Federal statistics show that the number of international high schoolers arriving in the United States on F-1 (non-immigrant) visas has jumped from about 6,500 in 2007 to 65,000 in 2012.<sup>1</sup> Many of these students are from China. Since 2011, China has become the country sending the greatest number of students. Reaching 25,880 in 2012, it has almost doubled the number from the second greatest sending country—Korea (13,873). Furthermore, China also has the fastest growth rate that continues to accelerate. (See table below.)



Ken Lagerveld

### Country with the Highest Growth Rate Sending High Schoolers to US<sup>2</sup>

Ranking	Sending Country	2007	2012	Growth Rate (%)
1	China	166	25,880	15490%
2	Senegal	1	69	6800%
3	Serbia	2	125	6150%
4	Afghanistan	1	53	5200%
5	Vietnam	66	2,685	3968%

The test-driven, highly competitive educational system in China has left its youth in high schools with little time for anything besides study. Many students are sent to boarding schools not because of distance issues, but, rather, to spend more time on studies. Parents, concerned about this model for intellectual development only, and desiring an earlier preparation for college abroad, look overseas for more holistic educational opportunities for their children.

In addition, China restricts teaching children religion. Christian schools are not permitted; this causes many Christian families to send their children overseas where Christian education is allowed.

### The Challenges

Though a few schools recruit students directly from China, most students go through agents to find either a boarding high school or a host family to live with while attending school in the U.S. Many agents consider their job completed after the students arrive at their schools. Unless something major happens, they are unlikely to become involved in the students' lives again; many students' guardians are just names on a paper.

When American host families serve as guardians, they often encounter unexpected challenges due to cultural and language barriers. In a survey taken at a college preparatory, non-denominational Christian high school where more than 30 out of their 50 plus international students were from China, many host families expressed difficulties in communication and discipline. The school, not yet fully equipped to handle the many challenging issues that international students face, had outsourced their counseling services. Of the students, who were already in their second semester in the U.S. when they took the survey, more than half felt homesick, struggled daily with culture shock and experienced relational conflict either at school or with their host families. Two-thirds expressed great academic pressure, usually caused by lack of language proficiency and the requirements and expectations of the new educational system.

When teens move from their motherland to a new country, from east to west and from familiar to unfamiliar surroundings, the pressure on them increases adding to their already challenging young lives. Away from parents, their situations often require of them a maturity level of college students, and often they find themselves lost, helpless and insecure. Some withdraw into isolation indulging in watching soap operas, playing video games and hiding in their rooms, unwilling to come out and participate in family and social activities. At school, in addition to their intensive school work, they often encounter difficulties building a deeper level of friendship with their American peers—and this at an age when peer acceptance is of great concern. In the midst of these struggles, anxieties and depressions can easily creep in and make things worse. When that happens, professional Christian counselors are often involved. However, the Chinese students, who likely never had any counseling experience in their country, often do not know how to respond and benefit from the help offered in a totally different culture.

Far away from home, from those who love and care for them, who will step in to care for and guide these confused, frustrated teens? Who are the guardians of these young souls?

## **The Ministry**

These challenges have stirred the hearts of many Christians. To capture this opportunity, many Christian organizations have formed to connect the teens from China with Christian high schools and host families, opening up channels to lead them to Christ and disciple them. Many of these teens have the chance to hear the truth through Bible classes and chapel times at school. Some unbelievers encountered God's love, heard the gospel and became Christians while living with Christian families; others have come to faith in Christ through mentoring by Christians. Christian students also grow in faith because of greater exposure to Christianity. Yet, there are still vast areas needing labor to turn this great opportunity into a great harvest.

### *The Crucial First Semester*

The first few months living in the new country seem to be crucial for these teens. Trying to regain control in the turmoil of change, these teens are vulnerable and ready to absorb whatever comes their way that will ease the stress. Some quickly adapt to American culture which mixes its merits like independence, equality and hard work with others such as individualism, materialism and so on. Some students use an avoidance mechanism that treats problems as if they did not exist. Whatever they adapt to, once they have started to settle in and rebuild new norms, it will take much greater effort to make new changes.

In competition with so many other influences, the first semester of these teens in the U.S. is a great time for sowing. During this crucial time, whether through one-on-one mentoring, biblical counseling, acculturation workshops or evangelical and discipling activities, we can point them to Christ and help them make him the foundation of their lives and help in times of trouble.

### *Heart language*

Many Chinese international students studying in Christian high schools are Christians. They attend chapel and Bible classes at school, live with Christian families and go to church with their host families. However, in my interaction with them, I realized that not many of them showed evidence of their faith being lived out. Among the unbelievers, though gaining knowledge about God, not many accepted Christ as their personal Savior.

Among the students I knew, two stood out as making great progress in their faith journey in their new country. One, let's call her Heather, was an unbeliever when she first came to the U.S. to study in a Christian high school. She was introduced to a Chinese Christian mentor three months after she arrived. Differing from a mentorship between American Christians and students, they conducted their conversations mostly in Chinese. Though Heather gained much Bible knowledge through her school and going to church with her host family, she did not quite grasp the true meaning of all she had learned since everything was in English. Not long after her mentor explained the key concepts of the biblical teaching in her heart language, she quickly received Christ and has been growing in her faith. She now prays and reads scripture every night and is always eager to learn more about her new faith and share it with her family and friends.

The other student, let's call her Victoria, was also an unbeliever when she first came to the U.S. After some conflict with her original American host family, she moved in with a Chinese Christian host family and started to go to a Chinese church. Now, she regularly participates in the youth program and has accepted Christ. Her changed life has amazed many people who knew her previously.

Is it a coincidence that in both cases Christians, who came from the students' own culture and spoke their heart language, became involved? The Apostle Paul said: "To the Jews I became as a Jew...to those outside the law I became as one outside the law.... I have become all things to all people that by all means I might save some" (1 Corinthians 9:20-22, ESV). Hudson Taylor, in order to win the souls of the Chinese, ate like the Chinese, dressed like the Chinese and spoke their dialects.

Receiving the gospel message through one's heart language in a familiar cultural environment makes it easier for people to embrace the gospel and grow in faith. People need to experience the closeness of God—he is not a foreign God from faraway. He is the God who knows where they came from, is at work in the very context of their lives and communicates with them in their own language!

Yet, getting to know a new language and culture is no easy task. Without sufficient training and immersion in a culture, how can American Christians accomplish this difficult task? But God, like always, seems to have already prepared an answer....

### *Partnership with Chinese churches*

Many Chinese speaking churches in America have realized their calling to serve these Chinese teens. Some brothers and sisters have already started to expand their Chinese college ministry to high schoolers; others are paired one-on-one with these teens to mentor them. In addition, many Chinese Christian conferences are held to further develop this ministry.

The next step seems to be to develop open, trusting, close relationships and partnerships among American Christians, Chinese speaking churches and Christian organizations. The Chinese church can bring the contextualized gospel and truth to these teens in their heart language; this, in turn, reinforces the Bible knowledge they are learning in English. Our American agents, schools and host families can also gain insight from our Chinese brothers and sisters in dealing with the language and culture barriers that arise as they care for these teens, making their ministry more relevant to them. Chinese churches and Christian organizations can partner with American Christian agents, schools and host families further expanding one-on-one mentoring programs as well as organizing evangelical events, providing Christian counseling, training, cultural workshops and so on—all in the heart language of these teens.

We, the Christian agents, schools, host families, Chinese and American churches together, can and should serve as the guardians of these young souls on behalf of our Heavenly Father who might soon be the Father of many of them as well.

## View from the Wall

### China's Christian Education Today

By John Cheng

Currently, Christian education is booming in China's churches. How many church-run schools are there? How many students are currently leaving public school to attend them? There has been no published data. Although nationwide coalitions of these educational institutions exist, because they are not legally licensed and many do not join national coalitions, securing statistical data is difficult. However, we do see churches in the north, northeast, southeastern coastal area, southern area and even in the central region starting schools. In the large cities and throughout the provinces of Zhejiang and Henan, churches are running Christian schools.



[Joann Pittman](#)

Unlike the church-run schools in China before 1949, the emerging Christian schools share the backdrop of the home school movement with its roots in dissatisfaction with mainstream public education and the fear of being eliminated.<sup>1</sup> These factors precipitated the initiative to launch another educational pathway.

China's homeschool movement began in the 1990s with the national education system's revival of classical literature. Soon private schools and homeschools appeared in various forms emphasizing a variety of subjects including the traditional classics, traditional Chinese medicine, martial arts, etc. Some well-educated parents, seeing the frustration of their children in the public schools, also began to teach their children at home. Gradually, homeschooling expanded as more students left the national education system.

In 2011, the Beijing 21st Century Education Research Institute organized "The First National Home School Seminar." Since then several national homeschool seminars have been held. In November 2013, Chinese house churches publicly held the "2013 Christian Education Network Forum," and China's Christian education movement began to emerge. Today, this movement is booming and growing both in scope and scale. It is developing on the periphery of China's educational policy with an attempt to change and enrich China's public education. The driving forces of this movement are its promotion by the church and the urging of parents.

#### Promotion by the Church

Christian education in Western Christian countries has its own traditions. Homeschooling, public education and private education have coexisted as three separate, legal, educational systems. In the United States, there are hundreds of homeschooling systems and Christian homeschools (A Beka, Sonlight, Accelerated Christian Education and others).

The Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) homeschool program came to China in the 80s, beginning as an international school and only recruiting foreign students. Since 2000, ACE has begun extensive training of local, Chinese teachers, and their schools have been springing up in various cities. Each year, ACE offers training for principals and school teachers at different levels to help them develop more school sites in China. This has encouraged Chinese house churches and introduced English Christian education to church-run schools. With the gradual increase of overseas students and expatriates in China, many additional Christian education systems have sprung up such as Alpha Omega, Wise English, The Potter's School (TPS) and classical curriculums.

In Shenzhen, since 2000, the Hong Kong Institute of Christian education has begun speaking on the Christian philosophy of education as a way to promote Christian education. Various mainland house churches have been sending people to its yearly meeting. This institute has been recognized and has both diploma and master's degree programs. Its structured Christian education has led mainland churches to recognize the importance of training up a child in Christ, which, in turn, has impacted the rise of Christian education in the Sunday school and the home. However, the issue of having one school system across the churches has generated much doctrinal controversy and is frustrated by varying school operational requirements. Therefore, the adoption of this model is relatively slow.

The Reformed Church (in China since the 80s) with its emphasis on Christian education has greatly impacted and helped church families. Currently, the Mainland Reformed Church College is teaming up with the Veritas Press Scholars Academy (VPSA) to promote a classic Christian education curriculum as well as to develop localized curriculum.

In mainland China, Christian education coalitions have been initiated largely by individual enthusiasts. These organizations are not affiliated with any one denomination; rather, they are independent underground organizations desiring to do cross-church ministries. They are similar to social organizations which rely on trading principles in their operations, production and circulation of goods. Compared with Western religious social organizations, they are less likely to receive donations.

#### Urging by Parents

Parents who have very young children are usually the ones moved by the church to seek Christian education. Chinese emphasize the importance of children's education since, in an unequal society, education is the key to upward mobility. Parents seek quality education even though not necessarily Christian. Once the church began extolling Christian education—training up a child spiritually, intellectually, physically and morally—Christian parents began to embrace it. This has been especially true for infants. Church-sponsored nursery schools attract many Christian parents since teachers in these schools show more love and patience with their students than do the public and private kindergarten teachers. There is also more parent-teacher interaction, and trust is developed. Furthermore, the Christian curriculum is effective in building the child's character as well as providing spiritual knowledge. All these

enhance the appeal of church-run nursery schools over other nursery schools.

Early childhood education is not compulsory. Regardless of where parents send their children, they must pay tuition and church-run kindergarten tuition is not necessarily higher than that of other nursery schools. However, once a child starts primary school, the number of parents who continue sending their children to a church-run school will drop greatly as they will begin to have concerns over the unregistered school facilities and teacher quality which may be lower than that in public schools. In addition, since China does not recognize the legitimacy of these schools, often parents will not consider them for their children. We found that poor-performing students who had been eliminated from public schools and children of migrant workers living in cities currently make up the main student body of church-run schools.

In China, fierce performance competition begins in elementary school. Yearly rankings for elimination create tremendous stress for both students and parents. For the sake of their future, some parents will re-enroll in church-run schools their children who have been eliminated as poor performers from public schools. However, these students are typically in upper elementary or junior and senior high school. Children of transient migrant workers, who want to enroll in the local public school, are required to pay a sponsorship fee to the education bureau. In addition, these children would be rejected by city-dwelling students and become psychologically scarred. Thus, their parents prefer the unregistered, church-run schools for them.

Of course, there are also urban, Christian parents who seek better education for their children in Christian schools. Most often, these children will eventually seek overseas Christian education. Parents who prefer good Christian education will choose local schools that adopt an overseas teaching model, such as using ACE curriculum. This type of school is an elite Christian school, is expensive and not what ordinary Christian parents can afford. Today there are an increasing number of these schools found especially in large cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and others. Like public or private schools, they offer programs preparing their students to go overseas, mainly to the United States.

### **The Trend of Market Choices Education**

#### *The Origin of Policy*

One of the consequences of market choices in education is that education becomes a commodity that can be purchased. This way of thinking has become a forceful, integral part of people's lives in China. The opening of China's education to markets has its roots in neoliberal economic reforms. After the 1980s, reforms in China opened up opportunities for foreign capital to flow into the country. David Harvey wrote: "Although still under the supervision of the Party, all of China is open to market forces and foreign capitals,"<sup>2</sup> while "with the increasing power and eminence of the market, the entire economy is moving into a neoliberal structure."<sup>3</sup>

In 1993, "China's Education Reform and Development Program" emphasized the subordinate position and role of education in serving economic development which is the main thrust in China's education reform. While defining the role of education as serving economic development, the state began to shrink the territory of public education and encourage social forces to enter the sphere of education and develop this industry.

In June 1992, in the "Decision of the State Council on Accelerating the Development of Tertiary Industry," education was classified as having the same status as a primary or secondary industry. It was given the definition of a "tertiary industry," being an important component of the economy. This means that education can be the same as all other industries in accordance with the principles of market law; it can manufacture, circulate and exchange its products. Industrialization policies eventually established education as a commodity with all its basic properties.

#### *Education as a Product and Commodity*

Today, the education market in China has become the industry with the largest market potential for profit. With full liberalization over the past two decades, the industrialization of education was finally established as a commodity. This has created a market for education thus turning education into a product. Education is equivalent to a business; educational activities are embedded in capitalistic operations. Education has become a means of generating capital; it is a purchasable commodity. It is the new national "economic growth point."

This outlook has resulted in a flood of tutoring classes—for primary, secondary and intermediate schooling—springing up across the nation in both urban and remote villages along with a large group of agents associated with study abroad programs.

According to statistics, the domestic market for training young children is more than thirty billion people with an annual growth rate of more than thirty percent. Statistics from "China's Education and Training Industry Research Report" (2012 edition), indicated that China had more than 50,000 English training institutions. At the end of 2010, the total market value of all publicly traded educational entities in China was more than 9.2 billion U.S. dollars.

#### *The Study Abroad Trend*

The total number of Chinese students studying abroad in 2010 reached 28.47 million. According to Ministry of Education data, ninety-three percent of these students were studying abroad at their own expense. Self-supported, overseas education has become the main mode of studying.

Meanwhile, the upward trend in this mode of study has been accompanied by changes in the age of students studying abroad as they become younger and younger. The "Long-term Education Reform and Development Program" (2010-2020) encouraged all types of schools, at all levels, to cooperate with and engage in international exchange programs. It pushed for improvement of teaching skills

and fostering the internationalization of education. Under this policy, various entities have forged cooperation with internationally renowned schools and have created international high school curricula.

Since government policy has allowed the development of high school abroad preparatory education by institutions, the number of students at the high school level continues to rise. According to 2013 statistics, the total number of students studying abroad exceeded 450,000. Among them, those studying for a master's degree were about sixty-two percent while high school and undergraduate students were approximately seven and twenty-nine percent respectively. There are reports predicting that in 2014 the number of study abroad students will continue to grow rapidly at fifteen to twenty percent.<sup>4</sup>

The drawing power for Chinese students to study abroad comes from the recruitment of Chinese high school students initiated by developed Western countries. The U.S. Department of Commerce pointed out that growth in the number of international students has a significant impact on the U.S. economy. International students' tuition and living expenses contribute more than \$21 billion<sup>5</sup> annually to the U.S. economy of which \$6.5 billion is from Chinese students.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, the subsequent retaining of foreign talent within the country, following their higher education, brings wealth to the host country.<sup>7</sup> These governments also save money by not having to provide the basic education for these workers.

### *Commercialization of Christian Education*

Christian schools are registered private schools in Western countries. Tuition and fees are not cheap—even for the country's citizens. In the United States, for example, generally the annual tuition is \$10,000 or more. An international student's tuition is three times more. This together with living expenses is a great deal of money. However, this has not deterred Chinese parents and their children from their enthusiasm to study abroad.

### **Challenges of Chinese Christian Education**

#### *Legal Constraints*

The current Christian education system does not have legal permission and protection in China; thus, students in unregistered church-run schools cannot legally obtain accreditation. Short of a breakthrough in this constraint, the scope and standards of Chinese Christian education simply cannot progress.

#### *Immature Indigenous Education System*

The rapid growth of Chinese Christian education took place in less than five years. Now, I believe, it will continue to widen its base due to the acceleration of capitalization in China. Despite the growing number of various schools and the increase in number of students, so far a mature, indigenous, Christian education system has not been developed.

#### *Uncertain Future*

The present predicament for church-run schools lies in an uncertain future for its high school graduates. The quality of their teachers and the academic performance of the graduates are not competitive with those from the best public high schools. This is evident in the college entrance exams. These schools have fallen short of their primary objective. Because of this, many leaders in the field desire to start Christian universities in China. A very bold idea, this would provide for direct transition into higher education. However, in a country where the state controls resources, such universities would be underground and illegal.

Many parents want their high school graduates to go to a Western country to attend a Christian college. Some send their children even before they reach senior high school. The fees for this kind of schooling are not inexpensive. Sixty or seventy thousand *yuan* (approximately 11,200 USD) a year for tuition and fees, plus \$7000-\$15000 in room and board, is not affordable for low-income families. What most parents do not realize is that Christian colleges in the West have, for the most part, lost the subsidies and financial backing of their churches. Most have become high tuition, private universities. Furthermore, college enrollment still requires entrance examinations.

Currently, schools and universities in the United States and other Western countries are increasingly stepping up their annual recruitment efforts in China. Various Christian high school exchange programs have become known and accepted across China. The impetus for the recruitment effort is due mainly to China's study abroad trend and secondly, from overseas schools' inclination for financial gain.

This is an era of unbridled, advancing global capitalism. The rise of Chinese Christian education is facilitated by this global capitalism and, inevitably, this same force will swallow it up. Christian parents and students will face a test. Who will determine their choices, their actions and their future path? Christ or the world?

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<sup>1</sup> In China today, parents are reacting against an exam-based education system in which, beginning as early as kindergarten, students are moved through an increasingly narrow channel that results in relatively few students being admitted to university. The rest are left with having learned how to take tests but without the practical skills that enable them to succeed in the real world. Even many who graduate from university are unable to find jobs, as university doesn't prepare them with the skills needed in an increasingly competitive global workplace that values innovation and teamwork. Parents see this and are looking for alternatives.—Ed.

<sup>2</sup> David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neo-liberalism*, Shanghai translation Publishing House, 2010, pp.143.

<sup>3</sup> David Harvey cited D. Hale and L. Hale, "China Takes Off" in *Foreign Affairs*, 82/6 (2003, 36-53).

<sup>4</sup> “Zhongguo liuxue renshu mingnian you wang chuang xin gao” 中国留学人数明年有望创新高 [The number of Chinese studying abroad is expected to reach record highs next year], *People's Daily Overseas Edition* 人民日报海外版, December 16, 2013.

<sup>5</sup> “Zhongguo zai mei liuxuesheng renshu po 15 wan—ju ge guo liuxuesheng shouwei” 中国在美留学生人数破 15 万—居各国留学生首位 [Number of students in the US from China tops 150,000—the most from any country], Chinanews.com 中国新闻网, December 2, 2011, <http://www.ciein.com/news/36551.html>.

<sup>6</sup> Xia Jia 夏嘉, “Zijin jinzhang jidai huanjie—meiguo shequ xueyuan re pan zhongguo liuxuesheng yuan” 資金緊張亟待緩解—美國社區學院熱盼中國留學生源 [US community colleges pin hopes on students from China to alleviate urgent financial problems], Chinanews.com 中国新闻网, December 9, 2011, <http://big5.chinanews.com:89/lxsh/2011/12-09/3520107.shtml>.

<sup>7</sup> Liu Keke 刘可可, “Liuxue jingji, yi ge ri jian sheng wen de xin redian” 留学经济，一个日渐升温的新热点 [The economics of overseas study—a hot issue that’s getting hotter], *Higher Education & Economy* 高教与经济 2001, no. 4; “‘Shi wan qiang jihua’ dajian mei zhong jiaoliu xin qiangliang” “十万强计划” 搭建美中交流新桥梁 [The “100,000 Strong Initiative” erects a new bridge for US-China exchanges], *People's Daily* 人民日报, June 21, 2011, 21.

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#### **Lesson from a Pool in Wenzhou Opportunities for Chinese Students in American High Schools Continued from page 4**

will eventually be one of the greatest forces for good in the world—a generation of amazing Chinese leaders. These leaders in turn will take their places of influence in one of the largest people groups in the world and will then further influence the rest of the world from their emerging platform.

Young Chinese students who come to us with a determined passion to work hard and a commitment to truly learn are allowing us to pour in that little extra (the “6 C’s and Leadership”). Students who accumulate the strengths of both educational systems and cultures are destined for greatness. They will be of strong and good character, persuasive communicators, critically able to apply principles in new situations, able to generate new ideas and solve problems creatively, work together effectively and collaboratively, effectively understand and appreciate other people and cultures, use technology for good and, ultimately, lead and influence for the universal good of our whole world.

We are privileged to add value to one of the most influential and important generations of leaders in the history of the world! What an amazing opportunity. Let’s get to work!

*Jon Keith, M.B.A., C.A.S., is Chief Operating Officer of Wheaton Academy (Wheaton, IL) and also serves as administrator of WANet, a nationwide association of schools with HomeStay boarding programs. He directs the Summer English Institute (SEI), works daily with Chinese teenagers, their host parents and home parents. An active speaker, writer and consultant, he travels regularly and maintains a wide range of relationships with high schools and universities in the U.S. and China. Mr. Keith and his wife are both products of an international boarding school and have served as host parents to numerous international students.*

#### **Caring for Chinese Teenagers in American High Schools Continued from page 7**

Sarah, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Ruth, Esther, Paul at Mars Hill and Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch all point to the potential for the Kingdom when cultures come together. American high schools are facing a significant opportunity as they welcome Chinese students into their school communities.

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<sup>1</sup> *Student and Exchange Visitor Program, US Immigration and Customs Enforcement, April 2014*, <http://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/by-the-numbers1.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> *The New York Times*, “Catholic Schools in U.S. Court China’s Youth, and Their Cash,” Kyle Spencer, April 6, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/07/nyregion/catholic-schools-court-chinese-and-their-cash.html?ref=todayspaper>

*Ruth Kuder is the International Student Program Director and High School Principal at Eastern Christian School.*

## Peoples of China

### Studying in America: Challenges, Differences and Outcomes

By Ma Jing

Nearly three years have passed since I began studying in the United States as an international student, and I now have enough experience to look back on it. I think about the process of how I have developed and what has made me who I am today. Things are quite different from before I came to America. Many years ago, I was just a naïve, soon-to-be international student who had a dream of coming to a new country—but I had zero experience or understanding of what it meant. I would like to share some of my thoughts about going abroad and becoming a high school student in a foreign country, and I would be very grateful if my story could be of benefit to future students.



Ken Lagerveld

It was not easy for my family to decide to send me to America. Besides the objective factors such as our financial capability and my academic records that had to be considered, we had to spend time working on the emotional journey. As the only child in the family, I had spent all my life within the embrace of my beloved parents, and they were the ones who felt the greatest loss when I suddenly left home for another continent on the other side of the world. It has taken me a long time to realize how much emotional sacrifice my parents have made in order for me to thrive, and I know that I still do not fully understand it and maybe never will.

I was always thinking how hard it would be for *me* to adjust to the new culture, what if *I* was not accepted by the American students and teachers, and how long it would take for *my* English ability to match up to the school's standard. During the two years I was in high school, I never gave a thought to the struggles my parents were going through in facing the absence of their only son. I filled our scant conversation times by complaining of the obstacles I encountered and forgot to ask how they were doing. I truly wish I had been more mature before leaving and had learned to show more consideration for my parents earlier. I would like to tell all my peers to sincerely consider how much their parents will be doing for them besides providing money for their high school tuition or mailing them Chinese snacks and winter clothes.

Speaking from my own perspective, studying abroad in an American high school was more complicated than I had expected. I would suggest that prospective students not have expectations that are too specific because reality does not alter itself according to one's desires. In most cases, American movies and television shows—even the ones that are the most realistic—only depict the most fun part of high school life that we, as international students, might, or might not, get the chance to experience. Just as real life is composed of only a small part of the dramatic and is mostly plain and normal, most of American high school life—although very different from what Chinese students experience in their schools at home—is still quite average and unremarkable.

American high-school education provides Chinese students with an alternative, comprehensive education; it should never be considered an “escape route” from difficulties. You might find math and science classes to generally be easier than the courses you have taken before, but always keep in mind that success never comes to those who do not work hard. Teachers will help giving you their best efforts, but nobody can provide the motivation besides yourself. Since American high schools focus less on collectivism and more on individual development and performance, it is very important to always be self-disciplined. No class representative will go to the front of the classroom each morning to collect assignments from the previous night and record the students who do not submit them. Teachers will not blame any student for receiving a bad score on a test. Instead, teachers will assign a project that is due in a week and never mention it again until the day before the deadline. If you forget to turn it in, you will see them writing down a zero as your score. Not turning in an assignment is considered a student's own choice, and teachers respect that. However, if failing to do so is the result of poor time management, you will find that American high schools are the best places to learn to be more punctual.

Another big difference that international students usually encounter is the value that American culture places on respect and boundaries. I was surprised to experience the dissimilarity between Chinese teachers' loudly reporting to the entire class students' scores on a recent test, going from the highest to the lowest, while American teachers give back an assignment, excellently done, facing down. As most Chinese students come from a school environment where they are constantly compared with each other on academic performance, it is quite challenging for us to accept the absence of this competition. For example, a lot of students do not realize that asking other students their score on a test or their grade point average (GPA) is considered rude and could be offensive.

For international students who live with host families, personal respect deserves even more attention and is often the cause of conflicts that could have been avoided. American families are generally very nice and welcoming, and they treat their host students warm heartedly. You might hear them telling you that you are “to make yourself at home” and think this means you have been given access to their entire home. However, do not assume that all parts of the home are open to you. When in doubt, always ask permission beforehand.

Try to be open and talk about your concerns; do not assume that your host family always knows what you are thinking. Often, conflicts arise because of misunderstanding and lack of communication. Although the one-child family is the most common type of fam-

ily structure in China, a large number of American families have more than one child. Your host family will try their best to accommodate your schedule within their family plans, but this might not always be to your satisfaction. Living with a large family is a good opportunity to learn to fit into the entire family's schedule and to remember that the world does not revolve around any one person.

American education has given me the chance to obtain a broader view of the world and to live outside my own "bubble." Each time I returned to China for vacation, I felt the change in my personality, maturity and capability in performing different tasks. American high school teaches me to be responsible for myself, to treat every person with respect and to appreciate how precious is the chance to go to a different country.

Above all, going to the United States was God's way of revealing himself to me. I was positively influenced by the church community I lived in and by the Christian school and host families that provided me guidance, enlightenment and reassurance. Living away from home challenged me in different ways, but it also helped me develop faster, both in my abilities and in my faith. Many times I received hope when the obstacles seemed too overwhelming to be conquered. I learned that by loving others, I received God's miracle of healing for my own scars; I learned that no pain could be greater than Jesus' suffering when he shed his blood on the cross.

The United States is a wonderful place, and it is worth it to go through all the challenges and difficulties living internationally brings. There are lessons one must learn both to prosper in this particular culture and to become a well-rounded person. When the opportunity comes and the door is open, we should step forward and prepare for the future. At this point in my life, I am looking back on my path with great comfort, and I am sure that many years from now you will be able to write your own golden story.

*Ma Jing is a Chinese international student who attended high school in Michigan and continues to study at New York University. He enjoys Italian food, jogging and reading.*



Cathy Lagerveld

## Ministering to Chinese International High Schoolers in the U.S.: Guarding Their Souls

Continued from page 9

### The Potential

Going through cross-cultural challenges at an early age could become advantageous for these teens in the future, preparing them to be excellent ambassadors bridging cultures and countries or even equipping them to become excellent cross-cultural missionaries.

In an age of globalization, these young people with cross-cultural life experience can greatly impact their generation. We are now given this wonderful opportunity to step in, colabor with God and each other to prepare them to be godly influences in their generation. What better way can we serve this purpose than by modeling unity as we work together across cultures and traditions? "... for he [Christ] has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility" (Ephesians 2:4 ESV). By doing so, the church of this generation will also be further unified and strengthened.

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<sup>1</sup> Page, C., Brock, M., Marzullo, L. and Omar, A. (2013). *Leading in an F-1 Context*. (The information was provided to the Council on Standards for International Educational Travel (CSIET) through a Freedom of Information Act request to the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. If a student participated across calendar years, his/her record is counted in each year.)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

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## Book Review: Eastern Versus Western Learning Approaches

*Cultural Foundations of Learning: East and West* by Jin Li

Reviewed by Lisa Nagle

*Cultural Foundations of Learning: East and West* by Jin Li. Cambridge University Press; 1<sup>st</sup> edition, 2012, 400 pages. ISBN-10: 0521160626, ISBN-13: 978-0521160629. Paperback; \$32.39 at Amazon.com

Reviewed by Lisa Nagle

Chinese students from middle school to university continue to come to the United States for an education in increasing numbers every year. The two cultures collide in classrooms largely due to the fact that Western and East Asian people have vastly different beliefs about learning which affects how they view the world, themselves and others.

Innovation, creativity and entrepreneurial spirit are attributes that are being discussed and promoted at education centers in the U.S., China and around the world. School leaders in China recognize that their educational system does not promote creative thinking among middle school students. Can creativity be learned? Dr. Jin Li argues in her new book,

*Cultural Foundations of Learning: East and West*, that culture penetrates profoundly into all spheres of human life and underlies how children think and act. The notion of whether creativity is learned or not can only be answered by understanding other important processes that influence child development. It turns out that culture penetrates so deeply it affects how we learn, how we relate with others and how we think. Li sets out to discover if the basic learning concepts in Eastern and Western cultures are still alive today. While doing so, she also confirms a well-known fact: students from East Asian nations outscore students from the United States and other Western cultures from a very young age. The deep cultural differences between Eastern and Western societies about learning and development provide the complex reason for this.

### East Versus West: Different Learning Approaches

Jin Li grew up thoroughly Chinese even though she has lived in the United States for many years. Yet, she still remembers the voices of her parents instilling the importance of learning and education in her ears: “Having studied, to then always practice what you have learned—is this not a pleasure?” (“學而時習之不亦說乎”) “Continue studying without respite, instruct others without growing weary.” (“學而不厭誨人不倦”) “To know what you know and know what you do not know—this is wisdom.” (“知之為知之不知為不知是知也”) (p.12).

According to Li, Chinese students today have inherited the Confucian learning tradition which holds to the following (p. 14):

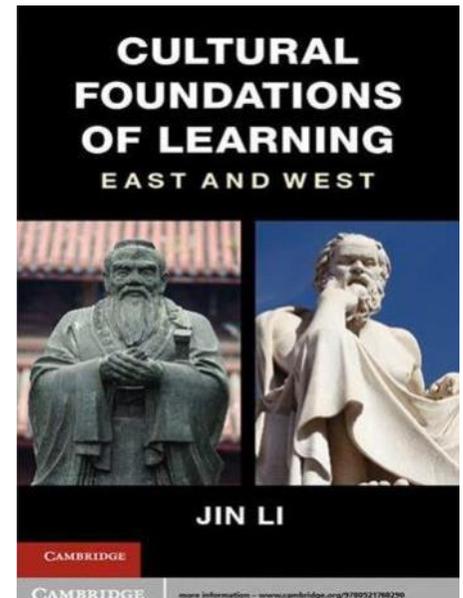
- Learning is the most important thing in life; it is life’s purpose.
- Learning enables one to become a better, not just smarter, person. The ultimate purpose of learning is to self-perfect and contribute to others at the same time.
- Learning is a life-long process.
- The kind of knowledge that sets one person apart from another does not come to one automatically. One must seek it. Seeking knowledge requires resolve, diligence, enduring hardship, steadfastness, concentration and humility.

In contrast, students from Western cultures have a different approach to learning which follows these key themes (p. 15):

- Human curiosity about the external world is the inspiration for knowledge.
- A relentless spirit of inquiry into the universe will lead to knowledge.
- Mind is the highest human faculty that enables this inquiry.
- Reason (not heart) is the process by which we know the world.
- The individual is the sole entity for inquiry, discovery and ultimate triumph.

These basic learning concepts are still alive today in both cultural worlds. What is important for those working in the field of education among Chinese middle school and high school students is to understand how different cultural characteristics influence a student’s learning and to discover whether these respective learning traditions still influence present-day learners. Researchers of learning models between East Asian and Western students found results that were quite startling. They found that American children, parents and teachers explained children’s achievement based on the notion of ability, but their Asian counterparts explained achievement based on effort. Based on her research, Li finds that *East Asian students work harder than Western students*.

One of the more well-known aspects of the Asian education system is the infamous examination system. Many critics of their examination-driven system claim that it is teacher-centered, authoritarian, favors learning by rote and stifles creativity. However, Li introduces us to an expert on the examination system in China who explains that East Asian societies are “stuck” with the exam system because it is the only solution for the situation with which their cultures are faced. Samuel Peng explains it best: “...the Confucian



tradition regards respect for and honoring of one's family as the most important moral foundation for oneself, at the same time Chinese people uphold the moral principle also espoused by Confucius: equality of education for all regardless of their backgrounds. However, those holding power over educational access face a serious moral dilemma when their family members request favorable treatment. If the request is denied, the person with institutional power violates the familial moral code; if the request is granted, the person violates public ethical standards. There is no other solution but to resort to the impartial test score" (p. 67).

### **Confucian versus Socratic Parenting Styles: The Heart of Chinese Motivation for Learning**

Where do children develop their learning beliefs? Are they born with them or do they come from the environment in their home and family? Asian and Western parents socialize their children very differently when it comes to education; this is a well-known fact. For example, in an East Asian cultural context, when a child performs well, his parents do not usually respond with excessive praise like Western parents do. Instead, after acknowledging a job well done, the East Asian parents encourage the child to try harder and achieve more next time. However, despite widespread criticism of the Asian examination system and learning approaches, it is actually the Asian approach that fosters a life-long love of learning.

Li collected data from simulated mother-child conversations so that she could discover different socialization processes for the two cultures. According to her analysis of the conversations, Li found that Western parents want their children to develop a "love of learning," yet they fear that if they are too demanding they will hinder their child's natural curiosity. On the other hand, Western parents find that if they are not demanding enough, then their child does not work or meet the standards. In contrast, her analysis of mother-child conversations about learning incidents shows that Asian parents teach their children to understand the value of diligence, extra effort and endurance. An Asian mother will encourage her child to do more and do better no matter how much or how well the child has achieved. This Asian approach, according to Li, fosters a love for life-long learning. In traditional Confucian culture, a love of learning is a moral imperative and is achieved over time by the development of moral virtues—filial piety, modesty, effort and perseverance. In contrast, Li explains that American students value independence and individual effort in order to achieve "the prize" (grades, income, status).

### **Confucian Learning Approaches Meet Twenty-first Century Global Realities**

With an increasing number of Chinese learners coming to the United States for an education from middle school to graduate school, the qualities of Chinese students have caused many debates. Currently, people have two contradictory viewpoints about Chinese students studying in American classrooms: passive learners, quiet and disciplined versus active participants, critical thinkers with a spirit of inquiry. While Li argues that Asian parents still hold to traditional Confucian learning approaches, Chinese middle school students demonstrate different characteristics than older Asian students. For the most part, there is very little perceived difference from their Western counterparts as they are active learners. They prefer more interaction with their teachers. These younger middle school students have been influenced by Western culture via social media, internet, movies and cross-cultural exchanges. However, there are still Confucian characteristics that persist. Confucian culture is deeply rooted in East Asian families for the better.

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## **Intercessory Notes**

*Please pray*

1. That Chinese teens as they study internationally, many in the U.S., will find support during the time of transition and be introduced to the gospel.
2. That Christian schools accepting Chinese teens will prepare well, provide care for these teens and support them in their studies.
3. That churches, both Chinese and American, interacting with international Chinese teens will be able to introduce them to Christ and help them grow in their faith.
4. That host families for these teens will have patience as they deal cross-culturally, give love and support and model the Christ life for the students they receive. That parents in China who are home-schooling or working within the Christian education movement would have wisdom in teaching their children and rearing them according to biblical principles.
5. That the Chinese government would be open to Christian education and eventually provide accreditation for Christian schools.



## Resource Corner

### Resources for Learning More about International Chinese High School Students

#### Organizations Working with International High School Students

Pacific Link International Educational Services (PLIES) [www.pacific-link.cn](http://www.pacific-link.cn)

WAnet <http://wanetusa.org>

The Association of Boarding Schools (TABS) [www.boardingschools.com](http://www.boardingschools.com)

Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI)  
<http://www.acsiglobal.org>

Christian Schools International (CSI) [www.csionline.org](http://www.csionline.org)

Council on Standards of International Educational Travel (CSIET)  
[www.csiet.org](http://www.csiet.org)

NAFSA: Association of International Educators [www.nafsa.org](http://www.nafsa.org)



#### Internet Resources

Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP)  
General Summary Quarterly Review April 2014 [www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/by-the-numbers1.pdf](http://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/by-the-numbers1.pdf)

Zinch (Connecting students with scholarships and schools) [www.zinch.com](http://www.zinch.com)

#### You Tube Videos

“A Conversation with American and Chinese Students”  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=0FNZK9O9ThU&list=PLB49EAA6804403D58&index=33](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0FNZK9O9ThU&list=PLB49EAA6804403D58&index=33)

“Education, Education – Why Poverty?”  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=BP61LwODTnY&index=30&list=PLB49EAA6804403D58](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BP61LwODTnY&index=30&list=PLB49EAA6804403D58)

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