

EDUCATION

Updates

21 August 2018

ASIA & PACIFIC

Singapore, August 15. 2019 school year to start on Jan 2 and end Nov 15: MOE. [Straits Times] Primary and secondary school students will start classes on Jan 2 and end on Nov 15 next year, the Ministry of Education said on Wednesday (Aug 15). The term starts on Jan 2, as Jan 1, a Tuesday, is New Year's Day, a gazetted public holiday. There are three scheduled school holidays. Teachers' Day will be celebrated on Sept 6, and Children's Day on Oct 4. [LINK](#)

Australia, August 17. Minister defends fenced-off classroom for boy with autism. [SMH] The Australian Capital Territory has backed a specialist school that created a fenced-off facility to isolate a student with high needs from his peers. Abdul-Ghani Ferkh, who has complex autism and alleged to have physically assaulted staff and damaging property, was suspended from the Woden School in early April after running off campus to the local shops, and had since waited more than four months to return to class. This month, his family were told he could only come back under strict new conditions that banned him from interacting with other students and some staff and restrict his movements in the school to a specially-built classroom encircled by fences and a floor-to-ceiling security gate. The school said this was the only way to commit to supporting Abdul's education, while ensuring the safety of its staff and Abdul, but his family have labelled the set-up inhumane and advocates have also raised concerns about the isolation. [LINK](#)

Singapore, August 19. Singapore's Lee Sees 'Large Expenditures' on Health, Housing [Bloomberg] Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong outlined plans to boost support on health care and public housing that he said will require "large expenditures," putting pressure on the city state to find new sources of funding for its growing social spending. Lee's initiatives -- detailed in his annual National Day Rally speech on Sunday -- are aimed at providing financial reassurance to Singaporeans for years to come and to address locals' concerns about rising living costs. The plans come at a time when governments around the world grapple with the challenge of losing voter support over rising income inequality. [LINK](#)

India, August 21. Can sports be declared part of fundamental rights like education? [The Times of India] The Supreme Court on Monday agreed to hear a PIL seeking its direction to Centre and States to make sports compulsory in educational curriculum from elementary to higher education and to declare right to sports as a part of fundamental rights on line of right to education. [LINK](#)

AFRICA

Jamaica, August 19. Education Ministry to Push for Greater Performance by Students [JIS] Minister of State in the Ministry of Education, Youth and Information, Hon. Floyd Green, says the Ministry will be pushing for even greater performance by students in external examinations, especially Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) subjects. Speaking at TIP Friendly Society's 2018 Scholarship awards luncheon at the Knutsford Court Hotel in New Kingston on August 17, Mr. Green cited the increase in students' performance in CSEC, which showed an overall increase of 3.8 per cent this year when compared to 2017, and emphasised that Jamaica's youth can improve their annual performance in all external examinations. [LINK](#)

EUROPE

United Kingdom, August 16. A-level results 2018: Teenagers achieve rise in top grades [BBC]. A-level students have been awarded the highest proportion of As and A*s since 2012, amid changes toughening the exams in England. Some 26.4% of exams have been awarded these top grades this year - but the proportion gaining A* to C dropped to 78.4% from 79% last year. England's exams regulator has said the results show a steady national picture at a time of significant change. [LINK](#)

A-Level results 2018: Key stats

26.4%

of entries scored either an A or A*, up slightly on 26.3% in 2017

97.6%

was the overall pass rate, down from 97.9% last year

97,627 students took Maths, this year's most popular subject

10,286 students took Computing, up nearly a quarter from 8,299 last year

Source: Joint Council for Qualifications

Finland, August 13. Performance Ranking of Scientific Papers for World Universities is released by National Taiwan University provides overall ranking, rankings by six fields, and rankings by 14 selected subject. [LINK](#)

EUROPE (CONT'D)

Finland, August 13. Finnish universities among world's best in research [Good News from Finland]. The National Taiwan University (NTU) Ranking, an annual survey of the scientific research pursuits of the world's top universities, features eight Finnish universities. Also known as the Performance Ranking of Scientific Papers for World Universities, the NTU Ranking ranks 800 universities across the fields of agriculture, engineering, social sciences, clinical medicine, life sciences and natural sciences. The University of Helsinki was the best performing Finnish representative, coming in at 79th place overall. The university was placed 30th in agriculture, 62nd in life sciences and 91st in clinical medicine. [LINK](#)

United Kingdom, August 16. What was new about this year's exams? [BBC]. New AS and A-level syllabuses have been phased in across schools in England since September 2015. The change was brought in by the then Education Secretary Michael Gove with the intention of making the exams more "fit for purpose" - in other words, harder. Under the new system, students sit all A-level exams at the end of two years of study, instead of taking modular exams throughout the course, as they had done in previous years. AS-level results no longer count towards A-level grades and levels of coursework have been reduced, with more courses assessed entirely through exams. [LINK](#)

United Kingdom, August 16. Foreign languages suffer further slump [The Guardian]. A-levels in traditional foreign languages have suffered a further slump, with the number of people taking German falling so steeply that it has been overtaken by Mandarin. About 3,000 students sat German A-levels, a drop of 16% on last year and a 45% fall since 2010. French, the most popular modern foreign language, also suffered a steep decline, as part of a shift by students away from humanities towards the stem subject of science, maths and computing. [LINK](#)

United Kingdom, August 20. Back to school: Is the United States falling behind on education? [Politifact] The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development is the prime source for data on education. They administer the Program for International Student Assessment, or PISA, the gold standard for global tests. The exam, which measures reading, math and science, samples 15-year-olds in 72 countries every three years. The last test was in 2015. The United States fell just above the OECD average in reading and science, and below average in math, where it dropped 11 points since the last exam. The top tends to be dominated by East Asian and northern European countries. [LINK](#)

United Kingdom, August 20. New GCSEs put pupils under more pressure, say school leaders. [Guardian] The tougher standards demanded by the new style of GCSEs being awarded for the first time this year have put pupils under a great deal of additional pressure, according to school leaders. Hundreds of thousands of pupils in England will receive their results this week, with grades from 9 to 1 replacing the familiar A* to G. [LINK](#)

United Kingdom, August 21. Education quality and global rankings [PUNCH] The most influential global academic rankings – the highly influential Shanghai Academic Ranking of World Universities, Times Higher Education World University Rankings and QS World University Rankings – have been in existence for more than a decade and are now a major force in shaping higher education worldwide. One of their key purposes is to demonstrate the world's best universities, based on their own criteria. However, they consider fewer than five per cent of the more than 25,000 academic institutions worldwide. The rankings are influential – students make decisions on where to study; some governments allocate funds; and universities struggle to improve their position in them. [LINK](#)

AMERICA

United State, August 20. Equal distribution of federal funding will improve America's education, says research [Fox4] Through nationwide research, Dr. Reed-Marshall found fixing our schools' funding could be the ticket to better curriculums, improving classroom leadership and creating quality education in America. Dr. Reed-Marshall says the \$59 billion in federal funding is not enough and isn't going to the right places. Teacher Chrystal Miller stresses the notion that all areas aren't created equal when it comes to getting a piece of the education pie. If she had to give education funding an overall grade, she says it'd be a D or an F. [LINK](#)

UNESCO

14 August 2018 - UNESCO Education Camp empowers girls in STEM education [UNESCO]. UNESCO has announced that it will organize the first ever CJ-UNESCO Girls' Education Camp for Future Scientists from 16 - 18 June 2018 in South Korea to foster girls interest and talent in the field of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics). While strides have been made in improving girls' access to education around the world, girls are held back early in their education by biases and social norms that influence the quality of the education they receive and the subjects they study. This is particularly true for STEM education. Today, only 35% of higher education students studying STEM are women. And only 17 women have won a Nobel Prize in physics, chemistry or medicine compared to 572 men. [LINK](#)

OECD

14 August 2018 - Why apprenticeships are a 'win-win' for companies and employees [OECD]. Apprenticeship is an attractive form of educating young people and preparing them for the labour market - both for recent graduates who may be unsure of their next steps, as well as older adults looking to adapt their skill sets to a fast-changing market, and many countries have been trying to introduce apprenticeships with varying success. Read more to learn more about how apprenticeships can bridge the "skills gap", and why effective apprenticeship programmes are a "win-win" for both companies and employees. [LINK](#)