

CHINA

People with autism get chance to learn life skills

GUIYANG — Huang Zhuan, a special-education teacher, finds nothing more pleasing than seeing positive behavioral changes in her students.

Huang, 28, graduated with a major in special education from Anshun University in Guizhou province, and has worked for over five years at the non-profit Caring Home Special Education Training Center in Guiyang.

Huang still remembers the autistic twins who were among the first group of students she taught. Even accompanied by their mother, and through no fault of their own, the brothers struggled with their behavior in class, she recalled.

After two years of training, the younger brother is in standard education in kindergarten, while the elder is receiving practical life skills training.

The two children still keep in touch with Huang via telephone. "I'm proud and pleased to see that what I have taught has helped people in need," she said.

Autism in China has an incidence rate of 0.7 percent, and more than 2 million children under the age of 12 are on the autistic spectrum.

The figure is rising by about 200,000 each year, according to a report released in 2019.

"As a result of intellectual disabilities, it's difficult for severely autistic children to find an appropriate school to attend. To avail them of schooling, we decided to recruit professional teachers and administrative staff," said Zhao Xinling, 62, who worked in Guiyang's finance bureau before establishing the training center in 2003.

"It's just like planting a tree. Even if we are absent, it will protect the children from the wind and rain," said Zhao, who is the mother of an autistic child.

According to the Guizhou Disabled Persons' Federation, the number of special-needs agencies for autistic people increased to 70 in 2021, compared to just 28 in 2014. The number of autistic children undergoing specialist treatment has risen to 2,400 from just 280 over the same period.

Huang Xi is another mother of an autistic child. By the time her daughter was 4 years old it had become clear that her daughter was not developing as other children her age, and so Huang Xi took her to hospital where she was diagnosed with autism.

Children with autism often

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Huang Zhuan, a special-education teacher

struggle with speech and in the development of social skills.

In 2016, Huang Xi and Zhao decided to set up an autism therapy center. Named Guiyang Huiling, it provides specialist and round-the-clock care for people with autism aged between 16 and 59.

The center is equipped with an employment assistance station, a day-care center and an exercise room. There are a total of 56 people with autism there, with the eldest aged 45.

All autistic people at the center receive specialist evaluation of their condition before practical skills classes begin. They are taught how to buy ingredients and cook meals, make handicrafts, play instruments, and so on.

To take care of this special group, Huang Xi and other teaching staff often gather and discuss emotional and behavioral changes after class.

"If marks appear on their body, we need to find out whether they are allergic to something or had a fight with another person," said Huang Xi, adding that, since autistic people often cannot express themselves clearly, any changes deserve attention.

Huang Xi said that about 25 percent of autistic people at the center go on to live unassisted in society. Her autistic daughter has mastered the skills required to cook and do the laundry.

Since 2020, volunteers from a handicraft workshop in Guiyang have been visiting the center and teaching manual skills such as batik and flower-arranging.

"After the workshop they can sell their handmade products online and offline, and in the process, increase societal awareness," said Huang Xi.

"These days, the center mainly accommodates adult autistic people. We hope to provide lifelong company for these people," said Huang Xi.

XINHUA

Draft focuses on youth myopia rates, obesity

By ZOU SHUO

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Education and sports authorities, schools and parents should encourage young people to participate in sports to help mitigate the incidence of myopia and obesity among them, according to a draft revision.

The draft revision of China's Law on Physical Culture and Sports has been submitted to the ongoing session of the National People's Congress Standing Committee, China's top legislature, for a second reading. A draft generally becomes a law after being deliberated three times.

According to the Ministry of Education, the incidence of myopia among schoolchildren has increased to 52.7 percent in 2020 due to the increased usage of digital devices and fewer outdoor activities as a result of the COVID-19 epidemic, up from 50.2 percent in 2019.

The incidence of myopia among schoolchildren should be reduced by 0.5 of a percentage point every year on the basis of the 2018 level, according to a guideline issued by the Ministry of Education, National Health Commission and six other departments.

According to the National Health Commission, almost 20 percent of people between the ages of 6 and 17 were classed as overweight last year, and almost 10 percent of children under 6 were overweight.

The draft said that schools should provide enough physical

exercise as required in the national curriculum and physical education classes should not make way for other academic subjects.

Schools should make sure that students participate in at least one hour of physical exercise every day. They should hold at least one sports activity each academic year, and the country should hold nationwide athletic events for students at regular intervals.

The draft also stressed that schools should be equipped with sufficient facilities and qualified PE teachers.

Schools should also arrange appropriate sports activities for students with disabilities, and they should consider the students' physical conditions while evaluating their PE skills, the draft added. Xiong Bingqi, director of 21st Century Education Research Institute, said although various laws and regulations have stipulated that primary and secondary schools should have a certain amount of PE courses, they have not been strictly implemented.

While the Ministry of Education has required schools to ensure at least one hour of physical exercise per day, local education authorities have not held violators accountable, as they only value the student enrollment rate to higher-level reputable schools, he said.

Local governments should get rid of their over-emphasis on students' enrollment rate to good universities and pay more attention to promoting students' overall development, he added.

Space kite



People fly a kite simulating the docking of the Shenzhou spaceship to China's space station to celebrate the success of the Shenzhou XIII manned space mission in Weifang, Shandong province, on Sunday.

More than 20 kite makers spent over two months to finish the kite. LIU XIAOXI / FOR CHINA DAILY

China to up its textile recycling capability

New guideline to contribute to country's ambitious climate, pollution targets

By HOU LIQIANG

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China, producer of half the world's textile fiber, has unveiled a guideline that aims to significantly beef up its capability to recycle textile waste, most of which is nonbiodegradable.

Experts have lauded the initiative for its potential role in promoting low-carbon, circular economic development, saying it will contribute to the country's ambitious climate and pollution targets.

The country aims to recycle a quarter of its textile waste and use it to produce 2 million metric tons of recycled fiber annually by 2025, according to a document unveiled by the National Development and Reform Commission, the country's top economic planner, and the ministries of industry and information technology, and commerce.

Five years on from 2025, a relatively complete system for textile waste recycling will have been established in the country, it said. By then, China will be able to recycle 30 percent of its textile waste and pro-

duce 3 million tons of recycled fiber annually.

"As a key part of establishing and then improving a green, low-carbon and circular economic system, recycling helps in resource conservation and the reduction of pollutants and carbon emissions," the commission said in a news release.

Zhao Kai, executive vice-president of the China Association of Circular Economy, said that as people live wealthier lifestyles, there is a greater demand for clothing, which creates more waste.

Only about one-fifth of the roughly 22 million tons of textile waste generated in the country in 2020 was recycled. China produced only 1.5 million tons of recycled fiber that year.

"There is a lot of room for improvement in the country's capability to recycle textile waste," Zhao stressed. The guideline will hopefully address a series of weak links in textile waste recycling, he continued.

The document, for example, vows to introduce preferential policies to motivate companies to improve product design, so that they can be more easily dismantled, classified

and recycled after being discarded.

Aside from improving the network for collecting textile waste, he said, the guideline also aims to address problems that hinder reuse and recycling.

The country will hammer out and strive to improve the industrial standards and norms on cleaning, disinfection, epidemic control and trading of secondhand clothes, he said. Export control of used garments will be further strengthened.

The guideline pledged to foster leading enterprises in an endeavor to promote the use of recycled fiber in the textile, construction, automobile, agriculture and environmental protection sectors, he noted.

Other experts stressed the environmental benefits the document will bring.

Tang Shijun, former head of the Quartermaster Equipment Research Institute, said the use of every kilogram of recycled textile waste will help reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 3.6 kg and save 6,000 liters of water.

Sun Huaibin, vice-president of the China National Textile and Apparel Council, said China currently gets recycled fiber as a raw material mainly from plastic bottles and industrial textiles. Only a very small amount of old clothes are recycled.

Briefly

BEIJING
Strict action remains for financial crimes

Chinese procuratorates have been maintaining a strict approach to cracking down on crimes in economic and financial sectors, in a bid to forestall and defuse financial risks, the Supreme People's Procuratorate said on Tuesday. The SPP said in a statement that in the first quarter of this year, procuratorial agencies nationwide have been targeting tax-related crimes in some key industries and sectors such as entertainment and foreign trade, launching prosecutions against 1,842 people. In the area of illegal fundraising crimes using the guise of elderly care and online loans, a total of 3,808 people have been indicted over the first three months of the year, the SPP said.

Satellite obtains gravity field data

China's Tianqin 1 satellite has acquired global gravity field data during its in-orbit operation, according to Sun Yat-sen University in Guangdong province. The satellite was launched in December 2019 to test the technologies of the space-based gravitational wave detection program "Tianqin". The program Tianqin, meaning "harp in the sky", was initiated by the university in 2015. Gravity field data is of great significance to the national economy and people's livelihoods as it can aid geodesic surveying, geophysics, oil and gas exploration, and disaster prevention and mitigation.

HEILONGJIANG

Expelled student gets reinstated after error

The Suihua government of Heilongjiang province has repealed the education bureau's decision to expel a student from the city's No 2 Middle School, according to a statement released by the city's epidemic control and prevention headquarters on Tuesday. The Suihua education bureau said on Monday that the senior student had been expelled for failing to report to the school that a family member had returned from outside the city on April 11. The family member was then identified as a close contact of an infected person. Eight teachers and all the student's classmates and family members were quarantined, the bureau said. The bureau and the school did not have a correct understanding of the epidemic prevention and control policy and improperly punished the student, the statement said. The headquarters urged the school to correct the mistake and allow the student to return to campus immediately.

XINHUA—CHINA DAILY

BUILDING THE NEW ERA | IN OUR TIME

Dedicated couple help educate a generation

By ZOU SHUO in Beijing and YANG JUN in Guiyang

Pan Zhongyong is the only teacher at the Pingyu education center in the small rural village of Songbai in Guizhou province, and his wife Zhu Muqun is the center's only non-teaching member of staff.

Over the past 20 years, the couple has supported the dreams of lower-grade and kindergarten pupils in the mountainous Zhenyuan county, Qiongdongnan Miao and Dong autonomous prefecture.

The local pair are responsible for teaching, safety and cooking for the dozens of students at the center.

The center currently has 20 first-grade and kindergarten pupils. More than 300 students have passed through the school over the past two decades and some have even gone on to obtain master's and doctoral degrees.

Both locals to the area, the couple got married in 2002 having decided to dedicate themselves to local education.

While Pan teaches the young pupils, his wife cooks for students and instructs them on more practical matters such as general hygiene.

"Without the center, the young students would need to walk several kilometers on dirt mountain roads every day," Pan said.

In 2000, Pan graduated from teacher training school and began working as a teacher at the Pingyu education center. He was the first full-time teacher at the center.

However, he had doubts about staying there due to the poor conditions.

At the time, the center had only three rooms, and there was no playground.

After talking about it with his father, he had a change of heart. "You were born here. If you do not want to stay, nobody will. Do not forget why you chose to study at a teacher training school," his father said.

His father's words reaffirmed his determination to teach and so he devoted almost all of his energy to preparing classes and making sure each pupil receives tailor-made instruction.

The students' grades gradually improved and Pan won several teaching awards.

A principal at another primary school tried to persuade Pan to teach at his school but he refused without hesitation.



Pan Zhongyong visits a student's home in Songbai village, Zhenyuan county, Guizhou province, on Sept 7. JIANG CHUNJIAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

"I am accustomed to living here. The villagers trust me with their children and treat me as family. I am needed here," he said.

The parents of most of the children at the school work in the city and they are left to live with their grandparents and relatives.

The couple is like another guardian for the students.

With the integration of more local educational resources in recent years, the number of students at the Pingyu education center has been falling.

While all primary and middle school students are exempt from paying tuition and other fees by the government, Pan only charges preschool pupils 40 yuan (\$6) in textbook fees each semester.

"I have a monthly salary and the villagers can only make several

hundred yuan each month," Pan said. "I would feel guilty if I charged them tuition fees."

As a result of the government's poverty alleviation efforts in recent years, the education center has been renovated, with a new road leading to students' homes and a new basketball court.

Pan wants more young teachers to join him at the center, as he is not familiar with operating digital devices.

"I will stay here until there is no student left. It's a promise I made more than 20 years ago and I intend to keep it until I am no longer needed."

Zhao Yandi contributed to this story.

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