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BEIJING'S CLAMPDOWN SPARKS HONG KONG EXODUS

Hong Kong's airport has been thronged with families saying tearful farewells as they leave for new lives abroad. Tens of thousands of residents have left Hong Kong since China passed a national security law last year, causing the city's population to drop 0.6% in 2020, the first decline in 18 years. In the first half of 2021, the city saw an outflow of 89,200 residents, a 1.2 percent decline, including more than 15,000 primary and secondary students. Schools are losing both fees and government subsidies. "It's a serious situation, losing around 15,000 students in a year," said Dion Chen, chairman of the Direct Subsidy Scheme Schools Council. One prestigious school lost 160 pupils in 2020 – more than 10% of its students. (Bloomberg, August 4, 2021)

NEW, PRO-CHINA CURRICULUM FOR HONG KONG SCHOOLS

When Hong Kong students and teachers return this Fall, they will have a new pro-China curriculum. The high school subject "Liberal Studies" has been completely revamped and a new subject, "Citizenship and Social Development," will be launched in September. Topics will include the national security law and the integration of Hong Kong with Shenzhen and other mainland Chinese cities. At least three universities – Hong Kong Baptist University, Hong Kong Polytechnic University and Lingnan University – will make national security education compulsory, and students will have to attend courses, talks and seminars on the development of China and Hong Kong. Teachers and professors are also facing political pressure. "Teachers are worried about receiving anonymous political complaints while having to adapt to new curriculum changes," said Ip Kin-yuen of the Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union. Beijing has called the union a "tumor that must be eradicated." (*Japan Times*, August 5, 2021)

CHINA BANNING KARAOKE SONGS THAT ENDANGER NATIONAL UNITY

Beginning on October 1st, China will introduce a new karaoke "blacklist" that excludes any songs that contain "harmful content" from being performed at entertainment venues. According to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, karaoke must not endanger national unity, sovereignty or territorial integrity, incite ethnic hatred or undermine ethnic unity, promote cults or superstition or violate the state's religious policies. Songs therefore cannot encourage obscenity, gambling, violence, drug-related activities or crime. Nor should they insult or slander others. The regulations will "promote socialist core values, and maintain national cultural security and ideological security," officials noted. Content providers to karaoke venues will be responsible for monitoring the songs, the ministry said, because – with more than 50,000 "song and dance entertainment" venues across the country and a catalog of more than 100,000 songs – this arena would be hard for venues to police. In 2015, the country banned 120 songs from the internet after deeming them "harmful" to society, including Chinese songs titled "No Money, No Friend," "I Don't Want To Go To School," "One Night Stand," and "Fart." (CNN, August 11, 2021)

SHANGHAI CANCELS ENGLISH FINAL EXAM IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

The Shanghai municipal education bureau has canceled final exams in English in elementary schools, and will only hold finals in Chinese and mathematics. China's "education reform agenda has accelerated dramatically," the official Caixin Magazine reports. Cancelling the English exam is the "latest of a range of new measures sweeping China designed to reduce the academic burden on young students." In March, Xu Jin, a member of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, said that English takes up about 10 percent of class hours, but less than 10 percent of university graduates use the language at work. (*China Daily*, March 8, 2021; Caixin, August 9, 2021)

SHANGHAI MANDATES THE XI JINPING THOUGHT READER FOR STUDENTS

The Shanghai municipal education bureau has launched an official mandatory textbook for all schools in the upcoming fall semester: Xi Jinping New Era Student Reader on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics. A July 8th statement on the bureau's website said starting in the fall all schools are required to use the new book. "The reader is an important textbook for students to learn Xi Jinping's thoughts on socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era, and an important carrier to promote an integrated foundation for ideological and political courses in primary, secondary, and tertiary education," the bureau said in an official statement announcing the decision. Students using the textbooks will "gradually form an identity and build the self-confidence and self-awareness to be able to support the leadership of the party." (Radio Free Asia, August 12, 2021)