

### Chinese school sets up 'marks bank'

adapted from an article by **Tessa Wong**

- 1 A Chinese high school has come up with an innovative way to help struggling students – a 'marks bank'. The Nanjing Number One Secondary School has rolled out a scheme where students can 'borrow' marks to top up low scores so they can pass their tests. The school said it was aimed at reducing the stress of taking exams. The scheme has become a talking point in China which has seen rising concern over an education system still reliant on high-pressure examinations.



- 2 According to media reports this week, the school introduced the scheme in November last year for 49 students in an elite programme aimed at grooming them for entry into US colleges. So far, 13 students have taken part in the scheme. They incur a debt when they 'borrow' marks, and are expected to repay it with marks scored in subsequent tests. To encourage students to improve in their subjects, they can be charged 'interest' if they do not repay their loans quickly enough. Students can also be 'blacklisted' from borrowing if they fail to repay their loans on time. And just like in a real bank, the students will be given 'credit scores', based on their behaviour records, school attendance and fulfilment of classroom cleaning duties.
- 3 Director Huang Kan said in interviews with Chinese media that the scheme was aimed at changing China's exam culture and exploring a new evaluation system. "In past exams, scores have become everything, and the pressure on students has become immense," she said. "The purpose of an examination is to measure, give feedback, correct, and elevate standards – and not to make things difficult, punish or damage a student's enthusiasm." She added that the scheme would encourage students to have greater responsibility and a greater aptitude for learning.
- 4 The 'marks bank' has generated intense interest in Chinese media and online. While some believe it is a good move, others have questioned whether it may inadvertently send the wrong message to students. "Exams may lose their rigour. If you don't do well in a test you can just

take it again. But life often doesn't give you second chances," said one critic. Beijing News quoted an education expert as saying that the scheme was a 'double-edged sword' as some students may take exams less seriously and end up developing 'inertia'.

- 5 But Ms Huang Kan has defended the idea. "The 'marks bank' is not a charitable institution aimed at giving out marks to lazy students, rather it is a nurturing cradle aimed at giving opportunities to diligent students," she explained.

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