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## Opinion / Columnists

## Let us not ignore kids' pressures

By Wang Hao (China Daily)  
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I have not been able to bear the sound of children crying ever since I became a father 11 years ago.

Twice recently, I have been reduced to tears - once because of the plight of thousands of children of migrant workers; and the other because of my son.



WANG HAO

In the former case, a school for the children of migrant workers had been shut down due to safety reasons, and students were at a loss where to study.

In the latter, my son started crying as he read aloud from his diary - which he had previously kept totally private. "I'm tired and don't want to spend all my childhood in extra classes and doing endless homework," the sixth-grader said. "I have only one

childhood. I need real joy."

Such incidents would be enough to make anyone cry.

More than 400,000 children of migrant workers live in Beijing. They either go to public schools, where they pay an extra "transient schooling fee" or "education development donation", or study at privately run "schools for migrant workers' children", many of which operate out of shabby suburban houses, but charge much less.

More than 100,000 children study in such schools, most of which have not been approved by the government and could eventually be dismantled because they occupy dangerous buildings.

A friend of mine from Fujian who lives on a small tea shop in Beijing has to pay twice as much as local residents do to send his two children to school. One is in primary school, the other is in middle school.

By law, children should receive nine years of compulsory education up to junior high school. The system works for most students, though not when it comes to the children of migrant workers. Without urban resident status, these children are not quite sure where they belong.

"We have paid taxes to the city for 10 years," my friend says. "Why can't our children enjoy the same treatment as other kids?"

It is time the government address this issue and implement State policy to the letter. The law requires all public schools to enroll migrant children, but it is obvious that schools have their countermeasures in place.

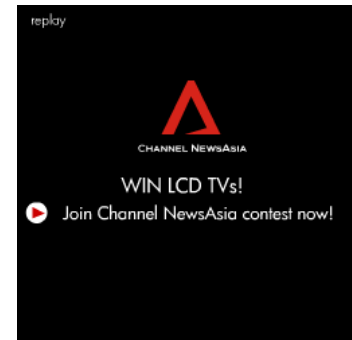
I fully support the closing down of unauthorized schools that cannot guarantee safety, but the students have to be accommodated elsewhere. Such schools should not even exist - migrant workers' children should go to the public schools closest to their homes without feeling isolated or the subject of prejudice.

The achievements of the past three decades would have been absolutely impossible without the toil and sweat of migrant workers. They built our Bird's Nest and subways. They sell vegetables and clean streets. They are part of our life and our cities - we cannot ignore their children's tears.



My son's tears reflect yet another problem with our educational system. To squeeze into a "key" middle school, he has to spend almost all his spare time and weekends attending math and English classes, which go beyond the proficiency that could be expected of a boy his age, in addition to hours of homework.

Apart from giving him a big hug and telling him "everyone has to endure some kind of hardship", I do not know what to do because I deserve some of the blame, too.



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Our children are living in anxiety under a profit-driven and exam-oriented education system. Parents, whether they are urban, rural or migrants, long for an education system in which children can be children and grow up healthy in every sense.

The government, schools and parents all have a role to play: I dare say no one wants to see children cry.

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