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Chinese students implore Confucius for exam luck

By [Alfred Cang](#)

SHANGHAI (Reuters Life!) - Confucius is one of China's great rational philosophers, but for high-school students across the nation, he's the natural choice for a supernatural helping hand as they prepare for exams this weekend.

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Students knelt and offered incense in front of a statue of the ancient sage in Shanghai's Confucius Temple, not far from the glitzy riverline of China's most modern and wealthiest city.

"Confucius in heaven, give me clear thinking, nimble ideas and extraordinary performance in the exam and help me get into Fudan University," high school senior Yu Jinmeng wrote on a tablet before hanging it on a tree beside the statue.

This weekend, parents will wait anxiously outside schools while students inside struggle with the all-important exams that determine their university education and their future.

This year, the number of students taking the exams will surpass last year's record of 10.1 million, according to the education ministry, upping the stakes for seniors.

"I think Confucius is a man of wisdom as every Chinese knows him and his words. I hope I can have a high score and become a teacher like him," said Sun Lisha.

Often the first in their families to go to college, today's senior students also bear the burden of high expectations.

"No matter what, I only hope she gets into her top choice," father Liu Qi said as his daughter placed a candle in front of the statue. "Let's step away from her. I don't want her to hear me, otherwise she will feel more pressure."

CONFUCIUS DIDN'T SAY

Confucius, who lived between 551 and 479 BC, promoted education and argued against the influence of ghosts and gods over daily life.

But that is a lesson lost on many students today.

"I think this should be helpful, since all the students who had visited here in the class ahead of mine were successful in the exam," said Yao Ting, who crossed the Huangpu River to pray.

Another student, Zhang Lei, said a prayer to Confucius had helped her pass high school entrance exams three years ago.

Confucius was criticized during the Cultural Revolution, but has since had a popular revival with books like Yu Dan's "Notes on Reading the Analects".

Today's China relies on regular examinations for government officials as well as entrance exams for students, but Confucius himself no longer figures among the test questions.

"We talk about him rarely," said student Yao Ting.

"We will not have any questions related to him in the exam."

(Editing by Lucy Hornby and Miral Fahmy)

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