

China, India schools outperform U.S., Europe

BY ANGELA CHARLTON

The Associated Press

PARIS – American and European schoolchildren are losing ground to countries such as China and India that are adapting faster to changing needs and producing more of the high-skilled workers the 21st-century demands, a new report says.

Richer nations, especially in Europe, face a growing lack of ambition among their children, fed partly by social inequality that schools have failed to redress.

“Education at a Glance,” an annual study by the Paris-based Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development released Tuesday, covers 30 of the world’s richest nations, but it also compares how they stack up

with key non-OECD members China and India.

That comparison will be crucial in the coming decades. The number of college graduates from China last year – 4.4 million – outstripped that of the entire European Union.

More college grads in the world have not, as some feared, created a glut. Wages for highly educated students have stayed the same or grown in all OECD nations. And as technology has advanced, job market demands for advanced skills have, too.

The report stressed the pressures on rich countries to meet the fast-growing demand for high-level skills, and warned that the United States and Europe are losing ground internationally because other countries are making faster and bigger

gains.

Among OECD members, East Asian countries are increasingly outperforming the United States and the Europe – and they “succeed without leaving many students behind,” the report said.

Some countries show a marked contrast between high-achievers and their struggling peers. More than a quarter of 15-year-olds in the United States, Italy, Mexico, Portugal and Turkey performed at or below the lowest levels on math – and students from poor families were 3.5 times more likely to do badly.

Family incomes continue to play a role in how well children do in school in industrialized nations – and in many countries schools even reinforce unequal-

ities instead of rectifying them, the report said.

The largest inequalities were found in Germany, France and Italy; the smallest in Finland, Canada and five of the six Asian countries on the list.

In looking toward future job needs, the report warned of a “lack of ambition” among youth in many OECD countries that contrasts sharply with families’ push to educate children in many developing countries – especially China and India.

The report also warned about increasing costs of dropping out of high school.

Adults who do not finish high school in the United States earn 65 percent of what people make if they do finish high school. No other country had such a severe income gap.