Beijing's two recent red alerts for air pollution led to the suspension of classes at primary and middle schools in the capital, but online education platforms experienced a boom.

According to 17zuoye.com, an Internet-based homework service, the number of newly registered users on Dec 8 was almost three times as many as the day before, with 3,000 teachers and 160,000 students in Beijing assigning and doing homework there. Users of Homework Box, a mobile app that has similar functions to 17zuoye.com, hit a new high in the number of questions downloaded and worked on by students from Dec 7 to 9, when Beijing issued its first red alert for air pollution and primary and middle schools of the capital suspended classes for three days. TAL Education Group, an after-school tutoring service, opened some of its online courses to students free of charge during red alerts. The service had more than 20,000 students in Beijing studying online courses during the three days of suspended classes after the first red alert, 50 percent more than the average on ordinary days.

The top subjects studied were fifth-and seventh-grade math and eighth-grade physics.