

**LegCo Panel on Education
Library Grant for Kindergartens and Child Care Centres**

PURPOSE

This paper briefs Members of a proposal to provide, in the 2001-02 financial year, a one-off grant of \$20,000 to each non-profit-making kindergarten (KG) and child care centre (CCC) to buy library books and teaching resources.

JUSTIFICATION

2. Early childhood education lays the foundation for life-long learning. It is important to cultivate in children at this stage an interest in learning and good living habits. The development of children's interest in reading and to help them form good reading habit is one of the curriculum aims of pre-primary education.

3. Research findings indicate that exposure to print is efficacious regardless of the level of the child's cognitive and comprehension abilities. Even children with limited comprehension skills will build up vocabulary and cognitive structure through immersion in literacy activities. Early exposure to reading materials helps enrich children's background knowledge, enabling them to have a good foundation for further build-up. As children's experiences of pleasure are generated through explorations of the environment, early learning through texts may also lead to sustained interests and curiosity to continue to learn about the world through texts in later years.

4. Books are one of children's major sources of knowledge and ideas. Children should be exposed to books with different styles of illustrations and presentation. Story books with interesting plots and containing pictures and texts that are complementary to each other are useful in developing children's interest in reading. The plots can attract children's attention to listen, improve their power of expression and motivate their learning of new words and ideas.

5. In the ‘Guide to the Pre-primary Curriculum’ issued in 1996, slots of time for story-telling are included in the sample time-tables for KGs and CCCs. Story-telling should be a daily activity in these institutions. Moreover, during inspections to KGs and CCCs, inspectors encourage and give advice on the setting up of reading corners and the use of story-telling to promote children’s interest in reading and to help them form good reading habit.

6. At present, KGs and CCCs provide library books for their pupils, and almost all of them have set up reading corners. The provision of a library grant, as one of the new initiatives in the 2000 Policy Address, will enable them to acquire more quality books of a wide variety and other teaching resources such as manipulative toys, dramatic play materials and art materials.

7. As the recommended basic programme for the Qualified Kindergarten Teachers course covers topics on ‘language and cognitive development’, ‘children’s learning’, ‘learning through play’, ‘language arts’ and ‘use of aids, materials and equipment’, kindergarten teachers should have adequate knowledge on both the selection and use of library books and teaching aids.

8. Apart from the support of teachers, parents’ participation also plays an important role in sustaining children’s interest in reading. Parents are the first teachers of their children. Responsible and sensible parents should spend some time each day on reading activities, such as story-telling or rhymes singing, with their children. They should encourage their children to take an interest in reading, and teach them how to select suitable reading materials to make good use of the reading corner in KGs or CCCs. Enrichment of the resources in KGs or CCCs for borrowing by the pupils will thus greatly facilitate parents in cultivating reading habits among their children.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9. The proposal will cost \$16.28 million, to be disbursed to 500 non-profit-making kindergartens and 314 child care centers.