

**Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA)**

**Comments by the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC)**

The EOC is asked by the Legislative Council Panel on Education to comment on the Education Department's paper on the SSPA that was presented to the panel for discussion at its meeting on 17 December 2001.

The EOC was given a draft proposal for review on Wednesday, 5 December 2001, with a request from the Education Department that a response be given by Saturday, 8 December 2001. Since the Department also requested that the documents "should be kept CONFIDENTIAL at the moment", the EOC did not immediately release its comments to the public but the letter was not confidential. The EOC's comments to the draft proposal are herewith attached for your reference. Given the short time for review and the fact that the proposals were not substantive, the EOC was only able to express its concerns to the different possibilities raised in the draft proposal.

The fundamental problems underlining both the paper and the draft proposal are:

1. The premise that having a majority of girls in the better schools is a problem while having a majority of boys in the better schools in the past was not viewed as a problem. The EOC believes that if an unbalance in favor of boys was good co-education, then the reverse is also good co-education.
2. The premise that the current internal assessment method is

inappropriate as girls achieve higher scores and so the Department should develop a new guidebook on Internal Assessment to remedy this problem. The EOC feels that any changes in Internal Assessment should be based on educational and appropriate social criteria rather than to assume a pattern of outcome that involves equal numbers of boys and girls achieving high scores. The fact that girls are achieving higher scores than boys in Hong Kong is not a unique phenomenon. Girls are doing better than boys in schools in all developed countries throughout all levels of education.

3. The premise that the increased performance of girls, at almost all levels of education, is a problem that has to be overcome, when, in fact, the increased performance should be seen as the successful outcome from the implementation of the 9 years of free compulsory education. Internationally, the focus is now on finding the reasons why boys underachieve and ways to identify the factors that constrain the performance of all children and to target and to remove these constraints.

Equal Opportunities Commission

7 January 2002