

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)1321/04-05
(These minutes have been
seen by the Administration)

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**Subcommittee to Study Issues Relating to the Provision of
Boarding Places, Senior Secondary Education and Employment
Opportunities for Children with Special Educational Needs**

**Minutes of meeting
held on Wednesday, 30 March 2005 at 10:45 am
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building**

- Members present** : Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung (Chairman)
Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-ye, GBS, JP
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong
Hon CHAN Yuen-han, JP
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon Jasper TSANG Yok-sing, GBS, JP
Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP
- Public Officers attending** : Items II and III
- Mr CHENG Man-yiu
Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (3),
Education and Manpower Bureau
- Mrs Betty IP TSANG Chui-hing
Principal Assistant Secretary (School Administration &
Support), Education and Manpower Bureau
- Mr Tony TANG Fat-yuen
Principal Education Officer (Curriculum Development),
Education and Manpower Bureau

**Attendance by
invitation** : Item III

The Hong Kong Joint Council of Parents of the Mentally
Handicapped

Ms Eva MOK
Vice-Chairperson

Ms TOU Lai-lin
Executive Member

The Parents' Association of Pre-School Handicapped
Children

Mrs CHUNG NG Sui-fong
Convenor of Main Stream Education Committee

Mrs Julie LEE LAU Chu-lai
Chairperson

Democratic Alliance for Betterment of Hong Kong

Mr CHEUNG Kwok-kwan
Education Policy Deputy Spokes Person

Haven of Hope Sunnyside School

Mr LAW Kai-hong
Principal

Hong Kong Special Schools Council

Dr Simon LEUNG
Chairman

Mrs Rita MANSUKHANI
Hon Secretary

The Association of Parents of the Severely Mentally
Handicapped

Ms YIP Yuk-chun
Vice-Chairman

Ms CHENG Yee-man
Vice-Chairman

Concern group on the provision of boarding/respice
service in schools for the physically disabled

Ms Irene TANG Oi-lin
Parent Representative

Ms LAM Suk-yu
Parent Representative

Hong Kong Association for Parents of Persons with
Physical Disabilities

Ms CHIU Yee-ling
Chairman

Ms SHEK Lin-tai
Accountant

CCC Kei Shun Special School

Ms YIU Ching-yi
School Affairs Officer

Mr TAM Tat-sing
School Social Worker

CCC Kei Shun Special School Parents Staff Association

Ms KAN Fung-kuen
Chairlady

Ms Angela KWAN
Committee Member

Parents' Alliance on Special Education System

Mrs LEUNG KONG Wai-ying
Secretary

Mrs LAM WAN Yin-fong
Member

The Special Education Society of Hong Kong

Mr Andrew TSE
Chairperson

Ms Maria WONG
Vice-Chairperson

Clerk in attendance : Miss Flora TAI
Chief Council Secretary (2)2

Staff in attendance : Mr Stanley MA
Senior Council Secretary (2)6

Miss Sherman WOO
Legislative Assistant (2)2

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I. Confirmation of minutes
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1134/04-05]

The minutes of the meeting on 22 February 2005 were confirmed.

II. Overview of children with special educational needs in Hong Kong
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1130/04-05(01)]

2. At the Chairman's invitation, Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (3) (DS(EM)3) briefed members on the main points of the Administration's paper for the meeting.

Capacity and enrolment of special schools

3. Referring to the enrolment statistics of the 62 special schools for children with special educational needs (SEN) as at 15 January 2005 in Appendix 4 to the Administration's paper, Mr Jasper TSANG observed that the total provisions in different categories of special schools were marginally in excess of the actual enrolment, suggesting a perfect match between the demand and supply of special school places. He asked whether children with SEN residing in different districts would be admitted to special schools in the same districts. He also asked about the waiting time taken for children with SEN to undergo the assessment for placement to appropriate special schools.

4. DS(EM)3 responded that as an established practice, Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) conducted annual assessment of the number of children with SEN, and the figures in Appendix 4 should reflect the actual situation as at 15 January 2005. He acknowledged that there would be some waiting time between the assessment of children with SEN and their placement

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to appropriate special schools. He pointed out that the total number of children with certain types of SEN such as the visually or hearing impaired were relatively small, and the provision of special school places for them was planned on a territory-wide basis.

5. The Chairman asked whether there were sufficient places in different categories of special schools for enrolment of children with SEN who had undergone the assessment process.

6. Principal Assistant Secretary (School Administration and Support), Education and Manpower Bureau (PAS(SAS)EM) responded that upon receipt of the assessment result of a child with SEN from the child assessment centres, EMB would brief the parents concerned on the school placement for children with SEN to facilitate their informed decision on school choices. She pointed out that there were sufficient special school places for students with SEN. However, there might still be students on the waiting list because some parents for various reasons would prefer to let their children with SEN enrol in special schools at the commencement of a school year or school term and therefore there would be a time gap between assessment and actual school placement.

7. Mr Jasper TSANG requested the Administration to provide data on the capacity and enrolment in special schools in order to indicate the supply and demand of special school places over the years. The Chairman also requested the Administration to provide a breakdown of the capacity and enrolment in different categories of special schools in the past three years.

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8. DS(EM)3 agreed to provide the requisite information. He, however, pointed out that the provision of special school places might be slightly reduced in recent years as a result of the implementation of the policy on integrated education and the provision of equal opportunity for children with SEN to receive education in mainstream schools in accordance with the Disability Discrimination Ordinance.

9. Mr Jasper TSANG asked whether the Administration had a policy to encourage parents to send their children with SEN to mainstream schools with a view to reducing the demand of special school places in recent years.

10. DS(EM)3 replied that the provision of special school places depended on the collective demand of children with SEN. The Administration had all along planned the provision on the basis of the results of the assessments and the choice of parents on school placement.

Exit pathways for children with SEN

11. Referring to paragraphs 37 – 39 of the Administration's paper, Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that parents and deputations were most concerned

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about the current arrangement of placing children with SEN in sheltered workshops and rehabilitation centres after their completion of Secondary Three (S3) studies in special schools. They considered that the learning environment in sheltered workshops and rehabilitation centres was unsatisfactory for their children to learn and develop abilities to lead an independent and meaningful adult life. Mr CHEUNG suggested that the Administration should incorporate the existing two-year Extension of Years of Education Programme (the Extension Programme) for children with mental handicap as a standard feature in the provision of special education and continue the Extension Programme until the implementation of a new senior secondary structure.

12. DS(EM)3 responded that under the current arrangement, students with mental handicap after completing S3 would be placed in training/skills centres, sheltered workshops and day activity centres in accordance with their needs and parents' choice. Effective the 2002-03 school year, the two-year Extension Programme was implemented for the mentally handicapped (MH) to facilitate smooth transition of S3 students from schools to work, post-school placement and adult life in line with the curriculum reform. The Extension Programme was now implemented in all MH schools and extended to schools for the physically disabled (PD) in the 2004-05 school year, and would continue until the implementation of the new senior secondary structure. Given the consensus that all children should enjoy a six-year secondary education in principle, the new academic structure should include special education as an integral part.

13. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong expressed appreciation of the Administration's commitment to continue the provision of the Extension Programme in special schools. He urged EMB to provide sufficient resources and support for special schools to implement the Extension Programmes for children with SEN until the new senior secondary structure and curriculum was implemented.

Post-secondary education for children with SEN

14. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong considered it fair and reasonable for children with SEN to have access to post-secondary education like their mainstream counterparts in the context of the proposed new academic structure for school and university education, i.e. a three-year junior secondary and a three-year senior secondary education, linking to a four-year university education (the "3+3+4" structure). Agreeing that not many children with SEN possessed the academic attributes to complete an undergraduate programme, Mr CHEUNG suggested that the Administration should work out alternative modes and pathways for children with SEN to pursue post-secondary education or continuing education in the context of the proposed "3+3+4" structure. Mr CHEUNG also urged the Administration to work out a blueprint on the development of multiple progression pathways for children with SEN to pursue post-secondary studies or training leading to recognisable qualifications for

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employment.

15. DS(EM)3 responded that apart from a six-year mainstream secondary education leading to participation in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education, EMB would explore the provision of other pathways for students with SEN who were less academically inclined to pursue career-oriented studies or training leading to recognisable qualifications for employment. The Administration would collaborate with the Social Welfare Department (SWD) and service providers including the Vocational Training Council (VTC) to explore the feasibility of providing diversified post-secondary courses for children with SEN in the context of the proposed “3+3+4” structure.

Extra-curricular activities and support

16. Mrs Selina CHOW considered that like their counterparts in mainstream schools, children with SEN in special schools should be arranged to participate in extra-curricular activities to enhance their physical and all-person development. She asked whether special schools would be provided with the necessary resources to organise extra-curricular activities for their students with SEN.

17. DS(EM)3 responded that similar to their mainstream counterparts, children with SEN would be provided with opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities suitable for their physical developments and intellectual attributes. Special schools were encouraged to seek financial assistance from the Quality Education Fund to launch projects or develop materials to support extra-curricular activities which would promote the healthy developments of students with SEN. The Chairman remarked that EMB and the relevant authorities should exercise flexibility in vetting the relevant funding applications of special schools.

Follow-up

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18. The Chairman requested the Administration to provide detailed information on the exit paths of children with SEN in special schools in the past three years. DS(EM)3 undertook to co-ordinate with SWD to provide the requisite information when available.

III. Issues relating to the proposed academic structure for senior secondary education and higher education
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1130/04-05(02)]

Representation of deputations

19. At the invitation of the Chairman, the following 12 deputations presented

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the views and suggestions as summarised in paragraphs 20 to 34.

Parents' Alliance on Special Education System

[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1152/04-05(01) and CB(2)1171/04-05(02)]

20. Mrs LEUNG KONG Wai-ying presented the views of the Parents' Alliance on Special Education System as detailed in its submissions. She highlighted that the Alliance requested the Administration to confirm that like other children in mainstream schools, all children with SEN would have access to a three-year junior secondary and a three-year senior secondary education under the proposed "3+3+4" structure.

The Hong Kong Joint Council of Parents of the Mentally Handicapped

[LC Paper No. CB(2)1153/04-05(01)]

21. Mrs TOU Lai-lin presented the views of the Hong Kong Joint Council of Parents of the Mentally Handicapped as detailed in its submission. She highlighted that the Council suggested that EMB should draw reference from overseas countries in the provision of post-secondary and continuing education opportunities for persons with SEN by way of community colleges operated by non-governmental organisations.

CCC Kei Shun Special School Parents Staff Association

[LC Paper No. CB(2)1130/04-05(06)]

22. Ms Angela KWAN presented the views of CCC Kei Shun Special School Parents Staff Association as detailed in its submission. She highlighted that children with SEN should be provided with a three-year junior secondary and a three-year senior secondary education, followed by a four-year vocational training.

The Association of Parents of the Severely Mentally Handicapped

23. Ms CHENG Yee-man said that the Association of Parents of the Severely Mentally Handicapped supported the proposed "3+3+4" structure under which a six-year secondary education would be provided for children with severe mental handicap who were not suitable for placement in sheltered workshops or rehabilitation centres at the age of 16. The Association considered that children with severe mental handicap should be provided with opportunities for continuing learning.

Concern Group on the provision of boarding/respite service in schools for the physically disabled (「爭取肢體弱能學校開辦住宿/暫宿服務」關注組)

[LC Paper No. CB(2)1130/04-05(03)]

24. Ms Irene TANG presented the views of the Concern Group on the

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provision of boarding/respite service in schools for the physically disabled as detailed in its submission. She highlighted that the Concern Group supported the proposed new senior secondary structure and anticipated that appropriate and sufficient support measures would be provided to PD schools and their students in the course of implementation.

*Hong Kong Association for Parents of Persons with Physical Disabilities
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1130/04-05(04)]*

25. Ms CHIU Yee-ling presented the views of the Hong Kong Association for Parents of Persons with Physical Disabilities as detailed in its submission. She highlighted that the Association supported the provision of senior secondary education and post-secondary education to children with SEN, and requested the Administration to provide appropriate support measures for PD children to attend senior secondary and post-secondary schools, including the provision of sufficient boarding places, staff and professional developments to teachers in PD schools.

The Parents' Association of Pre-School Handicapped Children

26. Ms Julia LEE requested the Administration to clarify that children with SEN would be provided with a three-year junior secondary and a three-year senior secondary education and curriculum as their counterparts in mainstream schools. She also requested the Administration to extensively consult special schools and parents in preparing the next consultation document on the proposed "3+3+4" structure. She anticipated that the Administration could work out the new primary, secondary and post-secondary curricula to enhance smooth transition of children with SEN from primary to secondary schools and from secondary schools to post-secondary institutions.

27. Ms CHUNG NG Sui-fong supplemented that EMB should ensure that children with SEN in mainstream schools were assisted in learning as stipulated under the policies on integrated education. She added that teachers in post-secondary institutions should be well trained and experienced with the learning needs of children with different types of disabilities.

Democratic Alliance for Betterment of Hong Kong

28. Mr CHEUNG Kwok-kwan said that the Democratic Alliance for Betterment of Hong Kong held a strong view that children with SEN should enjoy an equal right to education as other children, and have access to a six-year secondary education under the proposed "3+3+4" structure. In view of their different learning needs, children with different types of disabilities should be provided with appropriate curricula and duration of programmes. The Alliance considered that EMB should review the age ceiling in provision of special education, the provision of boarding places in special schools and the role of the

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existing Extension Programme in the context of the new senior secondary structure. The Alliance anticipated that EMB would plan and co-ordinate the provision of appropriate career-oriented programmes for children with SEN to develop their potentials, abilities and confidence to lead an independent adult life in the community.

The Special Education Society of Hong Kong
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1146/04-05(02)]

29. Mr Andrew TSE introduced the submission of the Special Education Society of Hong Kong. He highlighted that all children with SEN should enjoy a three-year junior and a three-year senior secondary education as other children in mainstream schools under the proposed “3+3+4” structure, and all special schools should be provided with sufficient resources to implement their school-based curricula which should incorporate the eight key learning areas and other basic elements specified in the new curriculum framework for senior secondary education. Ms Marie WONG supplemented that the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority should participate in the design of assessment mechanisms and performance standards for children with SEN in different types of special schools.

Hong Kong Special Schools Council
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1171/04-05(01)]

30. Mrs Rita MANSUKHANI presented the views of the Hong Kong Special Schools Council as detailed in its submission. Dr Simon LEUNG expressed disappointment that EMB had decided to maintain the current class sizes of special schools under the new academic structure, despite the strong views of deputations on reduction of class sizes for children with SEN expressed at the joint meeting of the Panel on Education and the Panel on Welfare Services on 10 January 2005. Dr LEUNG considered that the policy on class sizes was a determining factor in balancing the supply and demand of special school places, and the current policy of large classes would give rise to under-enrolment in special schools. Such under-enrolment would ultimately constitute pressure on the part of the special schools and their teachers in terms of reduction in resources allocation.

31. Dr LEUNG suggested that EMB should review class sizes for children with SEN, in particular the class sizes of 15 and 20 students for children with visual impairment and mild mental handicap respectively, which had been adopted since the sixties. He pointed out that the class size for the visually impaired had been reduced in the United Kingdom and was in the range of 8 to 12 students in Mainland China. In Hong Kong, the education sector was urging the Administration to implement small class teaching and considered that the class size of primary and secondary schools should be reduced to 23 students. Dr LEUNG also suggested that EMB should make reference to developing

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countries on reduction of class sizes for children with different types of disabilities. He queried whether the aggregate capacity and enrolment of 960 and 815 places in schools for social development had reflected the actual situation in a community with a student population of more than one million.

*CCC Kei Shun Special School
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1130/04-05(05)]*

32. Ms YIU Ching-yi presented the views of the CCC Kei Shun Special Schools (the School) as detailed in its submission. She highlighted that the School supported the establishment of a certification system to enhance the acceptability of special education and its interface with adult education, vocational and skills training. The School requested the Administration to specify the share of special education in the additional resources which would be set aside for implementing the proposed “3+3+4” structure.

33. Ms YIU further said that special schools were not provided with adequate resources in provision of extra-curricular activities for their students from Quality Education Fund and other schemes. She informed the meeting that the School had a student population of 220 students but was provided with only the upper three floors of the existing premises. As the lower three floors of the premises previously occupied by a mainstream school had been left vacant since the removal of the mainstream school, the School had applied to EMB for the use of the vacant floors in order to solve the problem of space shortage but its application was not yet approved.

*Haven of Hope Sunnyside School
[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1146/04-05(01) and CB(2)1153/04-05(02)]*

34. Mr LAW Kai-hong presented the views of the Haven of Hope Sunnyside School as detailed in its submissions. He highlighted that EMB should review its mechanism for consulting the stakeholders in the special education sector, set out the guiding principles and directions for reforms in special education, work out appropriate curricula and assessment mechanisms for children with SEN in special and mainstream schools, and review the class sizes in different types of special schools.

Members’ views and discussion

Class size and structure

35. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong expressed disappointment that paragraph 15 of the Administration’s paper had stated that class sizes of various categories of special schools would remain unchanged under the new senior secondary structure. He shared the view of the Hong Kong Special Schools Council that the class sizes of 15 and 20 students of special schools for children with visual

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impairment and mild mental handicap respectively should be reduced in the light of changing circumstances. He queried why the Administration had already decided that class sizes of special schools should remain unchanged at the present stage of consultation.

36. DS(EM)3 responded that there were diverse views on the optimum class sizes for different types of special schools in the course of consultation. He pointed out that the prime consideration for reduction of class sizes was availability of resources. The additional recurrent funding required for implementing the new senior secondary structure was mainly generated from the savings arising from a declining student population. There was no funding provision for reducing class sizes of mainstream schools and special schools at this stage. He added that the existing provisions for special schools did enable schools to operate flexible grouping of students, and many special schools actually operated smaller classes than the prescribed standards.

Consultation

37. Ms Audrey EU asked whether EMB would consider setting up a more effective mechanism for consultation with the stakeholders in the special education sector on the provision of special education to children with SEN under the proposed “3+3+4” structure.

38. Principal Education Officer (Curriculum Development) (PEO(CD)) responded that a Committee on Special Educational Needs under the Curriculum Development Council (CDC) had been set up to advise on curriculum development for students with SEN. Its membership consisted of a parent, school heads/teachers from different types of special schools, academics from tertiary education institutions and representative from VTC. The Committee would consult the Hong Kong Special Schools Council and relevant parties on issues in special education as and when appropriate. As regards the proposed “3+3+4” structure, the Administration had issued the consultation document entitled “Reforming the Academic Structure for Senior Secondary Education and Higher Education” for public consultation.

39. Mrs Julie LEE LAU Chu-lai said that parents were in general disappointed with the existing consultation mechanism on special education. She considered that EMB should improve its consultation mechanism and proactively approach parent associations for views and suggestions on provision of special education under the proposed “3+3+4” structure. Deputations attending the meeting expressed a similar view.

40. Mrs LEUNG KONG Wai-ying considered it inappropriate for the Committee on Special Educational Needs established by CDC to consult only one parent on the provision of special education to children with SEN. She queried whether the parent was representing parents of children with SEN or

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his/her personal views. She suggested that EMB should increase the number of parent representatives in its consultation mechanism on special education.

41. PEO(CD) responded that apart from the Committee on Special Educational Needs established under CDC, the Administration would collect views from stakeholders including parents from various channels. For instance, EMB would continue to consult and exchange views with deputations on the provision of special education under the proposed “3+3+4” structure.

42. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that EMB should consider the suggestion of the Special Education Society of Hong Kong to establish a joint working group on special education under the new academic structure to collect views from stakeholders and academics. He considered that EMB should provide an open platform for parents and other stakeholders to express views freely, and revert to the Subcommittee for in-depth discussion on controversial issues. Mrs Selina CHOW and Mr LEE Cheuk-yan expressed a similar view. The Chairman also requested EMB to consider Mr CHEUNG’s suggestion which would facilitate on-going consultation with stakeholders in the special education sector. DS(EM)3 undertook to follow up the matter and revert to the Subcommittee at the next meeting.

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Resources allocation and priorities

43. Ms Audrey EU said that she had the impression that the Administration so far did not have a detailed plan on provision of special education under the proposed “3+3+4” structure. She asked whether the Administration had set the priorities of proposals and estimated the resources required for provision of special education under the new academic structure.

44. DS(EM)3 responded that EMB had preliminary plans on the provision of special education under the proposed “3+3+4” structure, details of which could not be revealed at this stage. Meanwhile, EMB would continue to listen to the views and suggestions of the stakeholders and members of the community until the proposals were finalised for further consultation.

45. Ms TOU Lai-lin asked whether the Administration would eventually turn down the suggestions of deputations on the grounds of resources constraints. The Chairman considered that at this stage, the Administration should explore the feasibility of the suggestions of deputations and formulate the policies on provision of special education under the new academic structure, and examine the financial viability of individual proposals and their priorities for implementation at a later stage.

46. DS(EM)3 responded that availability of resources was irrefutably an essential consideration in policy formulation and implementation of new proposals on provision of special education. The Administration would continue

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to listen to the views of deputations and eventually accord priorities for implementing workable proposals on special education within budgetary constraints. The Chairman expressed appreciation that the Administration had adopted an open mind in formulating policies and plans for implementing special education under the new academic structure.

47. Miss CHAN Yuen-han said that she had discussed with some 100 principals and teachers in mainstream schools the provision of integrated education for children with SEN at their schools. She pointed out that the principals and teachers held a strong view that mainstream schools were not provided with sufficient resources for employing the necessary staff and developing their skills to assist children with SEN to learn effectively, and had encountered considerable difficulty in procurement of funds from the existing financial assistance schemes such as the Quality Education Fund. Miss CHAN considered that EMB should provide more support to mainstream schools in procurement of resources in order to address the different learning needs of children with SEN.

48. DS(EM)3 responded that both special schools and mainstream schools admitting children with SEN were eligible to apply for assistance under a number of financial assistance schemes including the Quality Education Fund. Individual schools should approach EMB for assistance and advice. He also suggested that Miss CHAN Yuen-han could pass relevant information to him for follow-up.

49. Miss CHAN Yuen-han pointed out that mainstream primary and secondary schools had collectively enrolled more than 27 000 students with different types of handicap, disabilities, behavioural and emotional problems. She requested the Administration to provide sufficient resources to mainstream schools with enrolment of children with SEN, in particular students with mild mental handicaps, autistic spectrum disorders and specific learning disabilities who needed special equipment, facilities and/or guidance in learning. She added that some special schools for the visual and hearing impaired might have to discontinue operation because of reduction of student population.

50. DS(EM)3 responded that the Administration was committed to promoting integrated education and providing opportunities for students with diverse learning needs to develop their potentials. As detailed in paragraphs 4 – 22 of the Administration paper [LC Paper No.CB(2)1130/04-05(01)], the Administration provided a range of administrative and financial supports to mainstream schools in provision of integrated education to some 27 000 students with SEN.

Provision of a six-year secondary education under the new academic structure

51. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan asked the Administration to clarify whether the

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provision of a six-year secondary education to children with SEN was equivalent to the provision of a three-year junior secondary and a three-year senior secondary education under the proposed “3+3+4” structure. He considered that EMB should not reject the provision of a three-year junior secondary education and a three-year senior secondary education to children with SEN on the grounds of resources constraints. He expressed confidence that the community as a whole would respect the right of children with SEN to education and support the allocation of additional resources for the provision of a three-year junior secondary and a three-year senior secondary education to them. Miss CHAN Yuen-han echoed that the community would not sacrifice the right of children with SEN to education because of resources constraints.

52. DS(EM)3 responded that the Administration had all along emphasised that special education would be incorporated under the proposed “3+3+4” structure and a six-year secondary education would be provided to children with SEN. He pointed out that the school curriculum and assessment for children with specific disabilities such as the MH children could not follow the mainstream curriculum and their learning progress should be individually assessed. He reiterated that given the resources constraints, the Administration would have to accord priorities in the implementation of special education under the new academic structure.

53. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan considered that a six-year secondary education was not equivalent to a three-year junior secondary and a three-year senior secondary education under the new academic structure. He agreed that the educational needs of children with mental handicap should be catered for through school-based curriculum and individual education programmes and assessment.

54. The Chairman pointed out that under the principle of “one curriculum framework for all”, students with SEN, like their counterparts in mainstream schools, should receive secondary education which covered studies on the eight key learning areas and would facilitate development of the nine generic skills. He requested the Administration to clarify whether children with SEN should be educated in accordance with the new curriculum framework under the proposed “3+3+4” structure. Mr LEE Cheuk-yan remarked that the provision of a three-year junior secondary education and a three-year senior secondary education were two important educational stages for which students’ learning outcome should be separately assessed.

55. PEO(CD) explained that while an ordinary student would undergo a three-year junior secondary and a three-year senior secondary education under the proposed “3+3+4” structure, education of MH children would not follow the mainstream school curriculum and therefore they would not be prepared for sitting open examinations. These children would be provided with individual education programmes and assessed in terms of their learning progress under these personalised programmes.

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56. Mrs Selina CHOW pointed out that the Administration would have to consider the duration, assessment and financial implications of providing MH children with junior secondary and senior secondary education under the new academic structure. She considered that the community would accept the provision of special arrangements and additional resources for MH children to receive secondary education. She suggested that EMB should discuss with the deputations the arrangements and financial implications for children with SEN, in particular MH children, to enjoy a three-year junior secondary and a three-year senior secondary education, and formulate appropriate policies for implementation of special education in line with the spirits of the proposed “3+3+4” structure.

57. Referring to paragraph 5 of the Administration’s paper, Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung queried the validity of the statement that there had already been consensus that all students would receive a six-year secondary education, as deputations had clearly expressed the view at the meeting that children with SEN should be provided with a three-year junior secondary and a three-year senior secondary education. He pointed out that the provision of six-year secondary education for children with SEN did not necessarily imply the provision of a three-year junior secondary and a three-year senior secondary education, and the resources required for the latter would be greater than that for the former.

58. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung highlighted that the new secondary curriculum for special education should be linked to the mainstream curriculum under the new academic structure so that children with SEN possessing the academic potentials could switch to mainstream schools as and when appropriate. Given that children with SEN should enjoy equal right to education, he asked whether the provision of a six-year secondary education to children with SEN without the component of senior secondary education was consistent with the Disability Discrimination Ordinance.

59. DS(EM)3 responded that he shared the view of Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung that all children should enjoy equal opportunities to education. The Administration would consult the Equal Opportunities Commission for any disputes over the right of children with SEN to senior secondary education under the proposed “3+3+4” structure. He considered it essential to reach a consensus among the stakeholders in special education on the interpretation of the new academic structure. He agreed with Mrs Selina CHOW’s view that EMB should discuss with deputations the necessary arrangements for children with SEN to attend a three-year junior and a three-year senior secondary education. PEO(CD) supplemented that the consensus that all students would receive a six-year secondary education was reached after consultation with relevant school councils.

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60. At members' request, DS(EM)3 agreed that the Administration would further clarify the arrangements for children with SEN under the "3+3+4" structure.

Follow-up

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61. In concluding discussion, the Chairman requested the Administration to respond to the concerns and requests of deputations and members for follow-up discussion at the next meeting. DS(EM)3 agreed to provide responses later. He also undertook to follow up the problem of space shortage faced by CCC Kei Shun Special School.

IV Any other business

62. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 1:20 pm.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
22 April 2005