



Watchdog

Early Learning and Development Centre

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As one of only two government subvented centres providing early intervention and therapy for non-Chinese speaking (NCS) children with Special Education Needs (SEN), Watchdog is acutely aware of the need for additional placements in the international school community. We currently provide services for 45 NCS children with another 50 on our waitlist. Students with SEN who wish to attend Watchdog are faced with a waitlist of over 1 year.

Best practices for students with SEN include providing an appropriate education, defined as meeting a child's unique needs. As stated in the EDB paper of March 2008, "NCS children are encouraged to attend local kindergartens using Chinese as a medium of instruction." For NCS students with SEN, many of whom struggle with verbal communication in any language, forcing them to adapt to a system where the medium of instruction is Chinese clearly does not meet the students' unique needs. In a 'World City', where resources are abundant and the policy, if not the implementation, does support best practices for the education of all children with SEN, why do the support measures listed for NCS students with SEN focus on the instruction of Chinese and the immersion into a Chinese language program?

Access to education is a basic right for all children, regardless of level of ability. The Hong Kong Government has taken steps to address the needs of Chinese speaking children with SEN through the provisioning of 62 aided special schools and 641 special education classes in the mainstream schools as well as through the EDB's New Funding Mode (NFM) and the SWD's Grants for services for individuals with SEN. Additionally, the March 2008 EDB paper highlights a school-based Support Scheme Grant for public schools to run supplementary language classes for newly arrived NCS students. None of the funding provided by these schemes are available to NCS students with SEN in the international school community. In a 'World City', where realization of the full potential of ALL citizens is essential to the future growth and health of our community, why is there a lack of parity between the services provided for Chinese speaking and non-Chinese speaking students with SEN?

Making funding available to NCS students with SEN in a manner similar to the NFM would help to overcome the cost obstacles confronted by the international school community when providing SEN services and achieve parity with Chinese speaking students with SEN.

The primary need for students with SEN is the provision of services in a manner that meets the student's unique needs. In a 'World City', why do we ask some of our society's most vulnerable to adapt to a system that, as structured, will not provide the maximum benefits? Rather, is it not incumbent upon each of us to encourage changes to the system that will ensure all students with SEN receive the education they are entitled to?

Thank you for your attention to and consideration of this critical issue.