

**Subcommittee to study issues relating to the provision of
boarding places, senior education and
employment opportunities for children with special educational needs**

New Senior Secondary Academic Structure for Special Schools

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to report the progress of the development of the New Senior Secondary (NSS) academic structure for special schools.

Background

2. In January 2006, the consultative document *Action for the Future – Further Consultation on Career-oriented Studies and the New Senior Secondary Academic Structure for Special Schools* was published to seek the views of the community on the issues of the NSS academic structure for special schools and Applied Learning (formerly known as Career-oriented Studies). The Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) has conducted many briefing sessions for the special school sector and parents, as well as professional dialogues with concern groups. After a 3-month consultation, the final report *Action for the Future – Career-oriented Studies and the New Senior Secondary Academic Structure for Special Schools* was released in August 2006 to advise on the future direction and arrangements of the NSS academic structure for special schools and Applied Learning.

Progress of Development of NSS Academic Structure for Special Schools

Academic Structure

3. With the implementation of NSS, students with special educational needs (SEN), like their counterparts in ordinary schools, will receive three years of senior secondary education. Since hearing impairment and physical disability often cause delay in language acquisition and cognitive development and students with these disabilities may need intermittent hospitalization, 10

years of basic education has all along been provided to help them complete the ordinary school curriculum for secondary education leading to the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE). However, not all these students require the extra year to complete their basic secondary education.

4. For students with intellectual disabilities (ID), an Individualized Education Programme (IEP) will define the learning goals and levels of attainment of these students under NSS. It will come up with an adapted NSS curriculum and students will not normally be required to sit the HKDSE examinations. Therefore, they will be provided with 3 years of junior secondary education and 3 years of senior secondary education. Nevertheless, for those who are absent from school for a long period of time due to health or other justifiable reasons, they can apply for repeating class similar to the current practice.

Curriculum Design and Framework

5. Students with SEN but not ID should aim at achieving the same curricular objectives for NSS, and be assessed by the same criteria but with special accommodations. To this effect, EMB and the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) will work out the appropriate arrangements.

6. For students with ID, the future curriculum for students with ID is not a prolonged programme of the current basic education. The curriculum design will be adapted to meet the specific needs of students. Language, mathematics and independent living will form the core of learning to meet the practical needs of work and adult life after schooling. Where possible, the core is to be complemented by electives or other school-based programmes, including Other Learning Experiences (OLE) to facilitate the development of positive values and attitudes, as well as the capability to explore and learn in an authentic environment. It is desirable for these students to have a strengthened IEP at different stages of learning to specify the learning objectives and attainment. This will help build up a student learning profile for each student depicting his/her full range of achievements under NSS.

The R&D Project for the Curriculum Framework for Students with ID

7. The development of the curriculum framework for students with ID will be tried out through R&D projects. Phase 1 of the project which focuses on the core studies, namely Chinese Language, Mathematics and Independent Living, has just started. Eleven special schools participate in the project. On-site expert support is provided to facilitate the project development. It is expected that the findings of the try-out will provide useful reference for the implementation of the curriculum in future.

Applied Learning Courses

8. Students with SEN who follow the ordinary school curriculum and are interested in Applied Learning (ApL) are joining the same pilot ApL courses as other students with the provision of appropriate support where necessary. For students with ID, EMB has launched the first pilot project (2006/07 – 2007/08) on the adapted ApL courses in September 2006. Two course providers, namely Hong Chi Association and Vocational Training Council have offered four courses, namely Hotel Housekeeping, Food Preparation, General Duties, and Western Bakery and Pastry to the mild grade and higher-end moderate grade students with ID. About 80 students are now studying these four courses. EMB will further work in collaboration with service providers to explore the possibility of offering a wider range of ApL courses for the next cohorts of students with ID.

Learning Outcome Framework (LOF)

9. The development of a common set of learning outcomes for students with ID is being planned. The learning outcomes will provide reference for comparison to be made among students with similar learning characteristics. Advice from overseas and local consultants will be sought on the project. The development of LOF will start in 2007/08 capitalising on the experiences gained from the R&D projects that were launched in September 2006. It will pave the way for the preparatory work for the development of systemic assessment to be commenced in 2012.

10. The levels and the contents of LOF should be measurable and be able to reflect both students' generic skills and the knowledge required for further training and transition to adult life. Extensive consultations and dialogue with stakeholders in the special education sector will be conducted during the developmental process.

Professional Development Programmes

11. To prepare special schools for the implementation of the NSS, four 3-day workshops (in two stages – 2 consecutive days in the first stage and one single day in the second stage) are organised for the school leadership teams of all special schools. The first stage has just completed in October 2006. The workshops have provided opportunities for the school leaders to ponder over the challenges of the NSS reform in a systematic manner and formulate school-based action plans and timetables; as well as provided them with opportunities for group discussion and reflection, sharing experiences with other schools and learning from local and overseas educators with rich experience in the field. Middle manager workshops will also be offered to special schools commencing in 2007.

12. Programmes to strengthen professional capacity in basic education, in particular on the core subjects, will continue to be conducted to better prepare our teachers (including teachers of special schools) for the NSS.

13. Based on the feedback from questionnaires issued to special schools in April 2006, the following training programmes will also be provided in the 2006/07 and 2007/08 school years:

- Implementation of Individualized Education Programme;
- Assessment for learning;
- Curriculum (for students with ID) Management Series;
- Understanding and interpreting the adapted Liberal Studies curriculum;
- Regular experience sharing sessions generated by the R&D projects.

Other Supports

14. Resources (e.g. Teacher Professional Preparation Grant and NSS Curriculum Migration Grant) have been disbursed to special schools to help them prepare for the implementation of the NSS. Overseas/local experts in the field of special education will be invited to help conduct professional development programmes and develop relevant learning and teaching packages. Curriculum and assessment guides will also be developed based on the experience gained from the R&D project, and will be ready by the 2009/10 school year.

School Fees and Boarding Fees

15. The Government is committed to providing free basic education up to S3 for all students. Currently, all students at senior secondary level in both ordinary and special schools pay the same level of school fees. Under the NSS, the current policy of 18% cost recovery will continue. The cost of both ordinary and special schools will be aggregated in computing the average unit cost. Students in both ordinary and special schools will pay the same level of school fees for senior secondary classes. Parents with financial difficulties may apply for fee remission through the Student Financial Assistance Scheme.

16. The existing boarding fee is \$440 per boarder per month for both 5-day and 7-day boarders. Some stakeholders opine that there is room for an upward adjustment of boarding fees through a gradual and phased approach. It is also reasonable that a 7-day boarder should pay a higher boarding fee than a 5-day boarder. EMB will continue discussing with stakeholders the fee adjustment to recover a reasonable portion of the government expenditure in phases, taking into account the financial impact on the parents. Parents with financial difficulties may apply for fee remission.

The Way Forward

17. EMB will work in collaboration with special schools to address concerns, create opportunities and monitor the development of the curriculum in the run up to the implementation of the NSS in the 2009/10 school year.

Advice Sought

18. Members are invited to note the progress of the NSS academic structure for special schools and give their views.

Education and Manpower Bureau
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