

For information

Legislative Council Education Panel

Review of the Native-speaking English Teacher Scheme

Purpose

This paper updates Members on the improved support for the Native-speaking English Teacher (NET) Scheme since October 2005 and the impact of the NET Scheme on learning and teaching in English.

Background

2. The NET Scheme was first introduced in 1998 for secondary schools to provide one NET over and above the teacher establishment to each public sector secondary school. The NET Scheme was later extended to public sector primary schools in the 2002/03 school year. Primary schools having six or more classes were eligible for the NET provision and every pair of eligible primary schools was allocated one NET. Enhanced provision was introduced from the 2004/05 school year so that eligible primary schools have been gradually moving to having their own NETs.

3. In the 2006/07 school year, the total numbers of NETs appointed are 431 in secondary schools and 460 in primary schools. In primary schools, 413 of the NETs are serving in one school (increased from 125 in 2004/05 and 274 in 2005/06 school year) while 47 are serving two schools. We shall continue to recruit additional NETs with a view to providing all eligible primary schools with their own NET.

Attraction and Retention of NETs

4. In the light of the higher than anticipated attrition rates registered in the preceding years, the Finance Committee approved in 2005 an improved remuneration package for NETs. Starting from the 2005/06 school year, the new remuneration package provides an additional incentive for serving NETs to continue their service under the NET Scheme. The retention incentive is applicable to NETs who have served EITHER two years of continuous service and are in the third and fourth years of continuous service OR four years of continuous service and are in the fifth year of service onwards. These NETs are eligible for receiving a retention incentive at

respectively 5% OR 10% of the current base salary subject to satisfactory performance.

5. With the introduction of the retention incentive together with the revised Special Allowance in the NET remuneration package in the 2005/06 school year, there was a lower percentage of contract non-renewal in the 2005/06 school year when compared with the 2004/05 school year (Table 1).

Table 1

<i>School Year</i>	<i>Contract Non-renewal of NETs</i>	
	<i>Primary NETs</i>	<i>Secondary NETs</i>
2002/03	Not Applicable	48%
2003/04	39%	44%
2004/05	46%	53%
2005/06	32%	25%

6. The Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) has held regular meetings with the NET Association (NESTA) to gauge views and feedback of NETs. Assistance and advice have been provided to facilitate NETs' adaptation to the local environment including induction programmes, enhanced central support and deployment guidelines issued to schools. Government initiatives have helped attract NETs to work in Hong Kong and to stay, including the relaxation of the work visa requirements for the accompanying spouses with effect from 15 May 2006.

Role of the NET Scheme

7. The NET Scheme is part of a package of efforts in enhancing English Language learning and teaching in Hong Kong. We have introduced the *English Language Education Key Learning Area Curriculum Guide for English Language (Primary 1 to Secondary 3)* in 2002 and the *English Language Curriculum and Assessment Guide (Secondary 4-6)* in March 2007. Following recommendations in the *Reform Proposals for the Education System in Hong Kong* by the Education Commission in 2000 and the *Action Plan to Raise Language Standards in Hong Kong* by the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research (SCOLAR) in 2003, we have developed basic competencies in English language for Key Stages 1 to 3 (i.e. Primary 1 to Secondary 3), continued to implement the Language Proficiency Requirement on English Language teachers, supported English Language teachers to possess relevant subject knowledge and pedagogy through incentive upgrading

schemes and implemented school-based support programmes. Complementing all these measures, the Primary and Secondary NET Schemes provide direct support to schools in terms of pedagogy, teacher development as well as resources development to add value to student learning.

Progress and Development

Primary NETs

8. To enhance capacity building in schools, an Advisory Teaching Team (ATT) has been set up since the 2002/03 school year. Under this programme, a team of Advisory Teachers (ATs) visit schools to provide on-site professional support to English Language teachers. Together with the NETs, the ATT collaborates closely with local English teachers (LETs) and the English Panels in enhancing the learning and teaching of English. During the 2005/06 school-year the team made 8 552 visits to primary schools covered by the NET Scheme. On-site professional support includes classroom practice and feedback, school-based curriculum development, and professional development workshops and networks, dissemination of good practices, and pastoral care to NETs. The team also provides Centralized Professional Development (CPD) workshops to all primary English Teachers, including primary NETs. The topics covered include Phonics, Storytelling, Shared Reading, Poetry Writing and Catering for Learner Diversity.

9. In the 2004/05 school year, the Team launched a pilot Primary Literacy Programme – Reading (KS1) (PLP-R) in 104 schools to enhance reading in English. The implementation of the PLP-R came in response to and in support of the establishment of reading workshops as recommended in the *Curriculum Development Council (CDC) English Language Curriculum Guide (Primary 1-6) (2004)*. The other distinctive feature of this programme is the emphasis on teacher development. The programme was expanded to a further 67 schools in the 2006/07 school year. A total of 1 910 teacher counts were trained from 2004 to date.

10. Deployment Guidelines for NETs in primary schools were devised to help schools effectively achieve the objectives of the Primary NET (PNET) Scheme. More than 80% of PNETs are currently deployed in Key Stage 1 (i.e. Primary 1-3). With such a deployment model the PNET Scheme hopes that children will have a positive early start and be exposed to an authentic English environment in order to maximise benefits from the Scheme. A review is currently being conducted on the Guidelines

and the new edition is expected to be issued shortly.

Secondary NETs

11. Following the success of the ATT in the Primary NET Scheme and in response to a call for more structured professional networking support for secondary NETs and local teachers, a Regional NET Coordinating Team (RNCT) was formed in the 2006/07 school year. This team builds capacity in NETs and LETs by sharing of effective strategies and resources through nurturing networks of teachers. The RNCT promotes the integration of curriculum guidelines and initiatives into the school curriculum and assessment design, and advises on NET deployment to best suit characteristics of individual schools and their students.

12. NET Deployment Guidelines for secondary schools have been developed following consultation with school representatives and based upon practices which have proven effectiveness. Schools are expected to review the previous year's deployment when designing a plan for the coming school year.

13. The *English Language Curriculum and Assessment Guide (Secondary 4-6)* promotes a student-centered, task-based approach to learning and teaching. It emphasises the integration of speaking and listening, reading and writing and experience with a variety of text types. With their diverse cultural backgrounds and vast experience in teaching English across the world, NETs can readily contribute strategies that match these aims and cater for the diverse student needs in particular schools. They are a resource in schools bringing in cultural experiences to enrich student learning.

14. NETs also have a rich background in incorporating English Language Arts into students' learning experiences. They help students to acquire language through drama, poems, songs, films and short stories. Students use the language and the knowledge of the topic in focus to respond to these text types. Under the guidance of NETs, students are able to develop their oral expression and critical thinking skills through discussion, debating and other speaking activities.

15. In the new senior secondary curriculum to be implemented, formative assessment is emphasised. NETs have extensive experience in using formative assessment to guide teaching programmes, including using portfolios of student work and moderated school-based assessment.

Evaluation

16. In the 2003/04 and 2004/05 school years, a School Self-reflection Exercise was conducted to encourage schools to reflect upon the effectiveness of the PNET Scheme in their school. The performance indicators identified were:

- a) English Language Curriculum Development;
- b) Professional Development of English Teachers;
- c) English Language Teaching Strategies;
- d) Student's Knowledge and Skills in English; and
- e) Students' Attitudes and Interest in Learning English.

The report of the study indicated that schools perceived an improvement in students' attitude and interest in learning English attributing this to the influence of the PNET Scheme. The NET, as a catalyst, has given impetus to a shift in culture and modification in the mode of teaching. A substantial number of respondents reported highly improved participation, high level of increase in peer-to-peer teacher interaction, and large increases in English usage in the classroom. In addition, 21 case studies of school projects involving NETs and ATs have showcased productive practices delivering curriculum objectives. They reported students who are happy to learn through the medium of English.

17. In 2003, the HKSAR Government commissioned Melbourne University and the Hong Kong Institute of Education to conduct a Territory Wide Three-year Evaluation (TWE) of the PNET Scheme. The objectives of the Evaluation were:

- a) to determine the effectiveness of the Scheme and to advise on its implementation strategies;
- b) to measure (cognitive and affective) proficiency of Hong Kong students in English at formative stages of development over three years; and
- c) to monitor and advise on changes in proficiency and attitudes over time in terms of valued added analyses.

The TWE is scheduled to complete by the end of 2007. Preliminary findings as at March 2007 indicate:

- a) The largest impact of the PNET Scheme was at P.1 level.

- b) Longitudinal tracking of student performance in English language demonstrated strong developmental patterns of improvements for students as they move from P.1-3 or from P.2-4 over the three years of evaluation.
- c) There were positive trends for students in PLP-R schools in terms of reading and writing proficiency. Observations also indicated changes to classroom practices in PLP-R schools.
- d) Continuity of teaching by NETs over the three years of primary education study was related to improved outcomes for students from home backgrounds that were less enriched in terms of support for English language learning.
- e) Student proficiency and development were associated with positive collaboration between LETs and the NET. Co-planning and co-teaching between NETs and LETs have become common practice in most schools.
- f) Higher mean achievement was found for students in P.1, P.2 and P.3. Different teaching strategies (e.g. shared reading and multi-media materials) suggested by the ATs and the NETs were associated with growth in language proficiency. The inclusion of these strategies was seen as important and these were among the more effective practices in promoting growth over the three year period.
- g) Most LETs and NETs had acceptable access to resources. At P.1, more teachers reported use of self-produced materials. This was linked to higher student proficiency, as was the practice of using resources matched to the level of the students. Teachers at these schools were more likely than other teachers to incorporate English materials from the AT in their teaching. It was also noted that access to materials provided as part of the PLP-R clearly improved students' achievement in reading and writing in English.
- h) CPD workshops have been well attended and supported by teachers and school leadership. When teachers attended CPD workshops, the impact on their teaching and the outcomes for the students were marked. The link between CPD and student achievement was especially note-worthy. It is rare to see such direct evidence of the effect of professional development on teacher behaviour and changes in student achievement.
- i) School heads play a crucial role for the success of the PNET Scheme. The benefits of the NET are greatest when the principals and panel chair own and support the objectives of the scheme.
- j) Positive impact on the attitudes of students was observed when their

LETs had formed supportive working relationships with the AT.

Way Forward

18. The preliminary results of the TWE indicated that the NET Scheme has been very effective in enhancing student interest and learning outcomes in English. The results of the Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA) have shown promising gains at the primary level in the last three years. The percentage of students meeting basic competency in English has improved from 75.9% in 2004 to 78.8% in 2005 and to 79.4% in 2006 at Primary 3 level, and from 70.5% in 2005 to 71.3% in 2006 at Primary 6 level. We will closely study the results in the final report of the TWE and school level evaluations to form the basis for further strengthening the impact of the Scheme.

19. The retention rate of NETs has improved after the introduction of the Retention Incentive. However, we acknowledge that NETs are a workforce with mobility and that individuals may move from one place to another over time. Some NETs may leave the Scheme for personal or professional reasons or return to their home country to discharge their obligations. Our revolving door is always open and we welcome NETs to rejoin the Scheme. The Administration will continue to play a facilitating role in recruiting and retaining quality NETs. The recruitment process is ongoing throughout the year and greater flexibility has been provided for schools in terms of recruitment and deployment of teachers.

20. Members are invited to note for information the progress updates above and the impact of the Scheme on learning and teaching in English.

Education and Manpower Bureau
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