

ITEM FOR FINANCE COMMITTEE

HEAD 156 – GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT : EDUCATION BUREAU

Subhead 700 General Non-recurrent

New item “After-school Learning Support Partnership Pilot Scheme”

Members are invited to approve a new commitment of \$110 million for launching an After-school Learning Support Partnership Pilot Scheme.

PROBLEM

We need to enhance after-school learning support for economically disadvantaged primary school students with academic needs to help them establish a sound foundation at an early stage.

PROPOSAL

2. The Secretary for Education proposes to create a new commitment of \$110 million to launch an After-school Learning Support Partnership Pilot Scheme (the Scheme). The Education Bureau (EDB) will collaborate with local tertiary institutions to encourage and enlist tertiary students, especially full-time students interested in joining the teaching profession, to provide after-school homework guidance for economically disadvantaged primary school students with academic needs from the 2011/12 school year.

JUSTIFICATION

3. To cater for the educational needs of children from low-income families, the Government provides various forms of student financial assistance. We also provide recurrent funding support for students from economically disadvantaged families to participate in school-based and community-based after-school learning support and extra-curricular activities. We further propose to render early academic support to these needy students to increase their learning effectiveness and help boost their performance at schools.

4. The proposed Scheme will complement rather than replace other prevailing programmes offering after-school support¹. It is intended to benefit not only the needy primary school students who receive after-school homework guidance but also the tertiary students acting as tutors. To the needy primary school students, the Scheme will enhance their learning effectiveness and help them establish a sound foundation at an early stage. To the tutors, the Scheme will enhance their understanding of the educational needs of students and give them a foretaste of a teaching career. For tutors who study at the teacher education institutions (TEIs), the Scheme will help inform their studies with practical experience to facilitate reflective and interactive learning. The Scheme will also give these tutors an opportunity to serve the needy in the community.

Details of the Scheme

Target primary schools

5. EDB will identify primary schools with a higher concentration of economically disadvantaged students and invite them to consider whether to join the Scheme. Building on the experiences of other support schemes for primary schools, we propose to use the percentage and number of students receiving Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) or Student Financial Assistance Scheme (SFAS) full grant as an objective criterion in identifying eligible schools. We may also consider according priority to schools that demonstrate capacity, competence and readiness in joining the Scheme such as those schools that attach importance to enhancing the quality of teaching and learning in their school development plans. To ensure the effectiveness of the Scheme at the outset, we envisage that it will initially cover around 50 schools.

Target student beneficiaries

6. Not all financially needy students would require homework guidance. On the other hand, some academically needy students may come from low-income families which for various reasons choose not to apply for CSSA or SFAS. We will therefore entrust the participating schools to identify target student beneficiaries who are both economically disadvantaged and academically needy using a school-based approach as in other school-based after-school support programmes.

/Beneficiaries

¹ Examples of such programmes include the School-based After-school Learning and Support Programme (which provides activities ranging from tutorial to sports, cultural and art activities) and the Induction Programme for Newly Arrived Children (which helps children who are new arrivals cope with adjustment problems and learning difficulties).

Beneficiaries should normally be recipients of CSSA or SFAS full grant, but schools will also have the discretion to offer up to 30% of places for economically disadvantaged students with learning difficulties who are not receiving CSSA or SFAS full grant.

Source of tutors

7. Given the objectives of the Scheme as outlined in paragraph 4 above, priority of tutor selection will be accorded to the students in full-time teacher education programmes in participating TEIs, although we may also consider recruiting full-time undergraduate students in other majors at TEIs as tutors. Currently, there are five institutions offering pre-service teacher training programmes including Hong Kong Baptist University, Hong Kong Institute of Education, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the University of Hong Kong and the Open University of Hong Kong. In the 2010/11 academic year, there are about 4 000 students in full-time teacher education programmes in these institutions. We will enlist the assistance of TEIs in inviting their students to join the Scheme. After consultation with the TEIs, our target is to recruit around 800 tutors in the first year.

8. Tutors are expected to provide four to six hours of tutorial service per week during the service period in a school term, and be capable of handling all subjects at primary level. They will receive an allowance, initially set at \$130 to \$170 per hour of service depending on their year of study.

9. To ensure effectiveness in the delivery of tutorial service, we intend to invite TEIs to provide induction/training for tutors so as to give them a better understanding of the education needs of target student beneficiaries and to solicit feedback from tutors. TEIs will be provided with grants for providing the induction/training.

Service provision

10. Participating schools will be provided an indicative share of tutorial service hours² based on their number of students receiving CSSA and SFAS full grant. Schools can then make school-based decisions on the arrangement of

/guidance

² If all 800 tutors will each serve five hours a week on average, there will be 96 000 tutorial hours per year (24 weeks).

guidance sessions to meet the needs of their students (e.g. time, duration, broad content, distribution of contact hours among target students in light of individual differences). The requirements of the schools will be disseminated through TEIs to tertiary students who have joined the Scheme, and these tertiary students may apply to participating schools that suit their circumstances.

11. For illustration purpose, if schools arrange four hours of learning support per week for each participating student in groups of eight students, the Scheme will benefit around 8 000 students³.

12. Schools will be provided with grants according to the amount of tutorial services arranged. They will be responsible for managing payment to tutors at prescribed rates upon delivery of service. In view of the objectives of the Scheme, schools should not use the grants to engage tutors who are not enlisted by TEIs. In addition, schools will be provided with funding to provide necessary support services, such as the engagement of its own staff or third party agencies. Unspent balance of the funding for both engagement of tutors and support services may be carried forward until conclusion of the Scheme or withdrawal of a participating school from the Scheme. With the proposed allocation of \$110 million, we estimate that the Scheme will run for three years until the end of the 2013/14 school year. In case there are unexpended funds, we will extend the Scheme until funds are exhausted.

Monitoring and evaluation

13. Schools are required to keep a separate ledger account to record all expenditure chargeable to the Scheme and ensure that all receipts and payments in respect of the Scheme are properly and timely recorded. Schools are also required to keep a clear record of the beneficiaries of the Scheme, tutors' attendance and performance and submit regular reports to EDB for monitoring purpose.

14. The Scheme will be launched on a pilot basis and we will monitor and evaluate its effectiveness in consultation with schools and TEIs. EDB will provide an evaluation proforma to schools to review the Scheme and reflect the outcome, including improvement in motivation for learning, study skills and performance of students. Feedback from tutors through TEIs will also be solicited.

/FINANCIAL

³ In an average school week, 800 tutors can provide a total of 4 000 tutorial hours. If students are organised into groups of eight and receive four tutorial hours a week, 8 000 students can benefit from the Scheme (eight students x (4 000 ÷ 4) = 8 000).

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

15. The Government has earmarked \$110 million for the Scheme. For planning purpose, the estimated breakdown is as follows –

	(\$ million)
(a) Payment to student tutors	83
(b) Payment to schools for support services and TEIs for training	22
(c) Contingency	5
Total	110

16. The estimated cash flow for the proposal is as follows –

School year	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Estimated expenditure (\$ million)	22	44	44

The above cash flow is estimated based on the assumption that there will be around 50 participating schools and 800 tutors in the first school year. With the accumulation of experience and subject to the response of primary schools and tutors, we expect more schools, students and tutors would join in the subsequent years.

17. Staffing implications arising from the implementation of the Scheme will be absorbed from within EDB's own resources.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

18. We have consulted representatives of school councils and TEIs in designing the Scheme.

19. We consulted Legislative Council Panel on Education on the Scheme on 13 June 2011. Members supported the submission of the proposal to the Finance Committee for approval.

BACKGROUND

20. The Financial Secretary announced in the 2011-12 Budget the proposal to earmark \$110 million to launch a three-year pilot programme to provide after-school homework guidance for primary students with financial and academic needs. The EDB will collaborate with local tertiary institutions to encourage and enlist tertiary students, especially those full-time students interested in joining the teaching profession, to serve as tutors.

Education Bureau
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