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Panel on Education

**Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat
for the meeting on 13 June 2011**

**Provision of after-school learning support for
students of low-income families**

Purpose

This paper provides background information on after-school learning support provided for students of low-income families under the School-based After-School Learning and Support ("SALS") Programmes and the three-year pilot After-school Learning Support Partnership Scheme. It also summarizes the concerns of the Panel on Education ("the Panel") about issues related to after-school learning support for students.

Background

School-based After-school Learning and Support Programmes

2. The Chief Executive announced in the 2005 Policy Address that proactive measures should be put in place to reduce inter-generational poverty. Focus would be placed on providing more assistance to the younger generation of needy families, and giving these children and young people opportunities for whole-person and all-round development.

3. To tie in with the policy on poverty alleviation, the SALS Programmes have been implemented since the 2005-2006 school year to enable schools to provide school-based after-school learning and support programmes, in collaboration with non-governmental organizations ("NGOs") where necessary, to students in disadvantaged families. The target students under the SALS Programmes are Primary 1 to Secondary 7 students in receipt of the

Comprehensive Social Security Assistance ("CSSA") or full grant under the Student Financial Assistance Schemes ("SFAS"). Schools have the discretion to offer no more than 10% of the places of each activity to needy students not in receipt of CSSA or full grant under SFAS.

4. In view of the diversity of needs of students, school-based activities under the SALS Programmes may take various forms, such as academically-oriented tutorial service; programmes that focus on personal development and skills training; and after-school care, including extra-curricular activities, for unsupervised children.

5. The annual provision for the SALS Programmes has been increased from \$75 million in the 2005-2006 school year to \$175 million starting from the 2010-2011 school year. The annual provision of the SALS Programmes has been apportioned into the school-based grant and community-based project grant for schools and NGOs respectively to organize after-school activities for the disadvantaged students. Under the school-based grant, each applicant school in the public sector and under the Direct Subsidy Scheme ("DDS") will be provided with subsidies at a rate of \$400 per needy student. NGOs applying to organize or collaborate with schools to conduct community-based projects will need to submit proposals to the Education Bureau for vetting.

6. In the 2010-2011 school year, school-based grants amounting to about \$65 million have been disbursed to 849 public sector schools and schools under the DDS, benefitting up to 163 100 students. As regards community-based projects, funding of about \$110 million has been approved for 309 projects organized by NGOs, benefitting about 68 600 students.

Deliberations of the Panel

7. The Panel discussed issues relating to the provision of school-based after-school learning support services for needy children under the SALS Programmes at the meeting on 20 January 2005. The Panel also discussed the effectiveness of the after-school programmes provided for non-Chinese speaking ("NCS") students to learn the Chinese language at the meeting on 14 March 2011. The views and concerns of members are summarized in the following paragraphs.

Criteria, content and operation of the SALS Programmes

8. At the Panel meeting on 20 January 2005, members noted the Administration's proposal to launch the SALS Programmes to enable schools to

strengthen co-operation with NGOs at district level to provide school-based after-school learning support and extra-curricular activities as appropriate to students from disadvantaged families. While expressing general support for the provision of school-based after-school learning support services for needy children, members considered that the Administration should carefully set the eligibility criteria for needy students to avoid unnecessary disputes over the use of public funds. Some members urged the Administration to consider providing out-reaching services to needy students who did not wish to participate in support programmes and activities conducted in schools, youth centres and venues located in other districts.

9. There was also a view among members that the Administration should allocate resources to support the provision of more remedial classes for academically low achievers in secondary schools, in particular Secondary 1 to Secondary 3 students. Members pointed out that the existing after-school remedial learning support offered by NGOs was mainly targeted at primary school students.

10. The Administration advised that it aimed at using the funding allocation under the SALS Programmes to provide needy students, both primary and secondary, with after-school remedial learning support and activities conducive to their whole-person development. Secondary schools with a large enrolment of low academic achievers were provided with additional resources to operate remedial classes for students. Further allocation of resources for remedial classes in secondary schools should be considered in the light of the competing priorities in education.

11. Concern had also been raised on the labelling effect on students participating in the SALS Programmes. In responding to the question raised at the Legislative Council meeting of 11 May 2005 concerning the SALS Programmes, the Administration explained that to avoid labelling poor students in the process of receiving applications from students and their participation in the activities of the Programmes, schools were encouraged to open up the programmes to all students. Schools were also reminded to pay special care in processing students' applications in order not to disclose the personal information of students in receipt of subsidy. To avoid any labelling effect on participating students, schools did not identify students by the categories of CSSA, SFAS or discretionary quota for other needy students.

Provision of after-school programmes for NCS students

12. At the Panel meeting on 14 March 2011, the subject of progress of support measures for NCS students was discussed. Members noted that to

further support NCS students to learn the Chinese language, the Administration had, as an initiative in the 2010 Budget, piloted a three-year project of After-school Extended Chinese Learning for NCS students.

13. Some members raised concern about the effectiveness of the after-school remedial classes in helping NCS to learn the Chinese language, given that these classes were only held once or twice a week and most parents were not able to offer support to their children in this regard. There was a view that students might enjoy the classes more if their parents could join them in attending the classes.

14. Members considered that students might lose interest in attending these classes if they were conducted in their own schools, considering that they had already spent the whole day at school. They suggested that the Administration should explore the feasibility of engaging different organizations to offer after-school remedial classes to provide more options and flexibility for NCS students in choosing a venue which best suited them with a view to enhancing their interest and motivation in attending the classes.

15. According to the Administration, NCS students were free to choose after-school programmes at their own schools or other venues operated by the Chinese Language Learning Support Centre commissioned by The University of Hong Kong. Indeed, some NCS students in non-designated schools attended these programmes held in other schools. The Administration would critically examine the need for more venues as suggested by members.

Latest development

After-school Learning Support Partnership Scheme

16. Recognising the wish of parents of low-income families for their children to receive homework guidance after school, the Financial Secretary proposed in the 2011-2012 Budget to allocate \$110 million to launch a three-year pilot After-school Learning Support Partnership Scheme ("the Scheme") to provide after-school learning support for economically-disadvantaged primary students with academic needs.

17. The Education Bureau will collaborate with local tertiary institutions to encourage and enlist tertiary students, especially those full-time students interested in joining the teaching profession, to provide after-school homework guidance for students from low-income families and help them with their studies. The Administration is scheduled to brief the Panel on the Scheme at

the meeting on 13 June 2011. Subject to the views of the Panel and the approval of the Finance Committee, the Administration plans to launch the Scheme in the 2011-2012 school year.

Relevant papers

18. A list of the relevant papers on the Legislative Council website is in the **Appendix**.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
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**Relevant papers on
Provision of after-school learning support for
students of low-income families**

Committee	Date of meeting	Paper
Panel on Education	20.1.2005	Agenda Minutes
Panel on Education	9.5.2005	CB(2)1304/04-05(01)
Legislative Council	11.5.2005	Official Record of Proceedings Pages 39 - 46 (Question)
Legislative Council	24.5.2006	Official Record of Proceedings Pages 96 - 100 (Question)
Legislative Council	21.11.2007	Official Record of Proceedings Pages 80 - 89 (Question)
Panel on Education	14.12.2009 (Item VI)	Agenda Minutes
Panel on Education	14.3.2011 (Item V)	Agenda Minutes