



English Schools Foundation 英基學校協會
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31 May 2012

The LegCo Education Panel
The Legislative Council
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central
Hong Kong

Dear Panel Members,

We write as members of ESF's Committee of Parents. Each one of us is either the elected Chairman of our school's Parent Teacher or Parent, Student and Teacher Association or a parent-elected member of our School Council. We are, therefore, in close contact with parents and we regularly hear their views and concerns.

The whole of the parent body of ESF is increasingly frustrated and disappointed by the delay in the review of the ESF subvention. We were told that a further report would be made to the LegCo Education Panel before the end of December 2011. This did not happen and we have not been given an alternative date. We call on the LegCo Panel to press the Education Bureau to establish a timetable for the completion of the review and to ensure that they adhere to it.

The future of the subvention is of crucial concern to parents. Without the subvention, which accounts for around 20% of ESF's income, school fees would have to rise significantly. Indeed we have already seen substantial rises in fees over the past 6 years because the freezing of the subvention for 11 years has meant that all increases in cost have necessarily fallen on parents' fees in order to safeguard the level of education and overall results. The original intention of the subvention was to meet the basic costs of a child's education while the parents' fee provided a top-up; that situation has been completely reversed.

Parents have chosen an ESF school because their children need an education in the medium of English; they wish their children to obtain qualifications which have ready international currency; they are looking for an international curriculum with an emphasis on developing children's values, collaborative skills and a spirit of enquiry. Our children could not cope in the local school system nor would they be welcome there because of the level of their skills in Cantonese.

Many of us have a child with Special Educational Needs who needs additional support beyond that provided routinely in a mainstream classroom. We value highly the differentiated approach to teaching that ESF provides, with the availability of more specialised support in a Learning Support class or Jockey Club Sarah Roe School. This kind of systematic support for English speaking children with special needs is available nowhere else in Hong Kong.

Nearly 70% of the families we represent have at least one member who is a Permanent Resident of Hong Kong. In every family there is one, often two, economically active members making a contribution to the prosperity, welfare and cultural richness of the Hong Kong community. There are 13,000 children in subvented ESF schools: we are not a small or marginal group; we represent a significant number of the tax-paying Hong Kong middle class, about whose welfare the Government says that it is deeply concerned. Yet our children receive only half (primary) or a little more than half

(secondary) the level of subvention available to children in DSS schools. This does not make sense given the Government's policy to support middle class Hongkongers.

We have eight parent members of the ESF Board of Governors among the membership of our Committee. We also are in regular dialogue and actively working pro bono with the CEO and members of the Senior Management Team through different committees and each school council. We know that the Board values its relationship with the Hong Kong Government, LegCo and civic society as a whole and is very willing to enter into discussion about establishing an appropriate regulatory regime. ESF always willingly accepts its accountability to the Government for the way in which it uses public money and it recognises that an increase in the subvention will need to be accompanied by an appropriate level of monitoring.

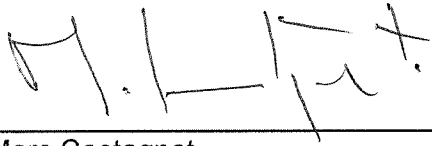
We very much appreciate the interest that LegCo members have shown in ESF schools through their letters and visits to schools. We ask you now to ensure that the efforts of all who have contributed to the review of the subvention are brought quickly to a conclusion. As residents of Hong Kong, we believe our children have a right to the same level of Government support as the children of any other permanent resident.

We trust that you will ensure that the uncertainty that has been hanging over us for so long will be brought to an end with a decision to treat ESF students in the same way as other children who have the right of abode in Hong Kong. We appeal to you to recognise our contribution to Hong Kong society and to continue, and indeed increase, the ESF subvention to a level that does not imply we are seen as second class citizens.

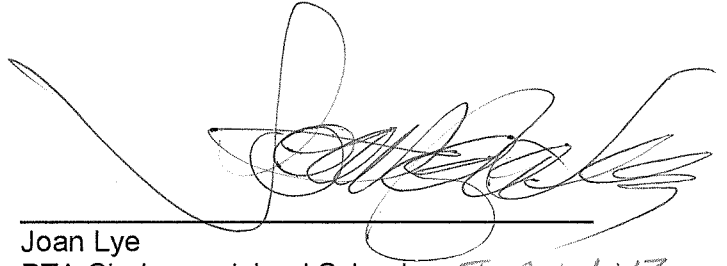
Yours sincerely,

(signed by every PTA Chairman or
all members of Committee of Parents)

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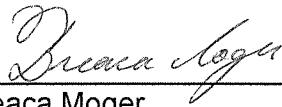
Marc Castagnet
Chairman, Committee of Parents, and
PTA Chairman, King George V School



Joan Lye
PTA Chairman, Island School *JOAN LYE*



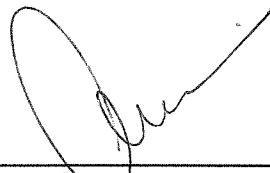
Mimi Hsiao
PTA Vice Chairman, Sha Tin College



Breaca Moger
PTA Vice Chairman, South Island School

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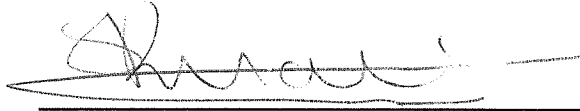
Dr Richard M Walker
PTA Chairman, West Island School



Michelle Bo Shan Tsang
PTA Chairman, Beacon Hill School



Cassie Jullienne
PTA Chairman, Bradbury School



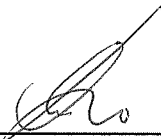
Stephen May
PTA Co-Chairman, Clearwater Bay School



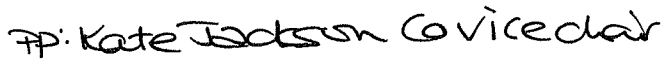
Scarlett L Mattoli
PTA Chairman, Glenealy School



Terri Donlon
PTA Chairman, Kennedy School



Dr Ada Lo
PTA Chairman, Kowloon Junior School


pp:  Co Vice Chair



Nicci Corrado
PTA Co-Vice Chairman, Peak School



Fiona Bishop
PTA Chairman, Quarry Bay School



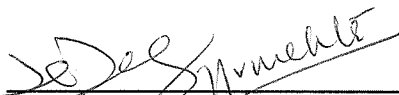
Thomas Chan
PTA Chairman, Sha Tin Junior School



Terry Mountain
PTA Chairman, Jockey Club Sarah Roe
School



Elspeth Shaw
PTA Chairman, Discovery College



Lina Leung/Nikita Mehta
PTA Co-Chairman, Renaissance College