

For information on
30 April 2013

**Legislative Council Panel on Education
Subcommittee on Integrated Education**

**Services provided to students with Specific Learning Difficulties
in Reading and Writing and Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder**

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the identification and support services provided by the Government for students with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD) and Specific Learning Difficulties in Reading and Writing (SpLD).

Background

2. AD/HD refers to a disorder affecting children's attention, hyperactivity and impulse control, which make these children behave differently from those of their age. Such differences hinder their learning as well as their social and family lives. Research studies suggest that AD/HD is related to brain development. Children who have AD/HD would have more difficulties in executive functioning and behavioral inhibition when compared to those of the same age. In Hong Kong, AD/HD is diagnosed by psychiatrists or pediatricians with relevant professional training.

3. SpLD generally refers to severe and persistent difficulties in learning to read and write. Other than performing significantly poorer in reading and writing than other students of the same age, students with SpLD also have deficits in reading and writing-related cognitive skills. Research findings in recent years showed that SpLD is congenital. However, effective early identification and intervention may lower its incidence rate.

4. Based on the records of the Education Bureau (EDB), the numbers of students with AD/HD and SpLD attending public sector ordinary schools in the 2012/13 school year are as follows:

	Primary school	Secondary school
AD/HD	2 450	2 330
SpLD	8 390	9 050

5. As regards the tertiary education level, figures are compiled based on the information provided by individual students pursuing full-time sub-degree and undergraduate programmes. For the 2012/13 academic year, there are 10 students with AD/HD and 14 students with SpLD¹.

Identification and Assessment Mechanism

6. For children with developmental disorder, early identification is the first and critical step towards effective intervention. Hence, the Government has established an effective system for the early identification and assessment of these children. In 2005, the Department of Health (DH), Hospital Authority (HA), the EDB and the Social Welfare Department (SWD) jointly launched a Head Start Programme on Child Development, now known as Comprehensive Child Development Service (CCDS). The programme provides pre-primary institution teachers a mechanism to refer at-risk children with physical, developmental or behavioural issues to the Maternal and Child Health Centre (MCHC) of the district for assessment, and appropriate treatment and support. Under CCDS, a referral and reply system has been developed and implemented in all pre-primary institutions since 2008. In addition, a Behaviour Management - Teacher Resource Kit was prepared by DH in collaboration with EDB and SWD to enable kindergarten teachers to have a better understanding about the CCDS operation and referral system, and enhance their knowledge of common pre-school developmental and behavioural issues to facilitate early identification and referral of children in need for assessment and treatment.

AD/HD

7. The Child Assessment Service (CAS) of the DH provides comprehensive multi-disciplinary team assessment for children who are under 12 years of age with special educational needs (SEN), including those children with AD/HD, and arrange rehabilitation services for them as necessary. The assessment team comprises multi-disciplinary

¹ Excluding students pursuing non-UGC funded sub-degree/degree programmes

professionals such as paediatricians, clinical psychologists, medical social workers, audiologists, speech therapists, optometrists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, public health nurses and other auxiliary personnel. They collaborate to provide children suspected with AD/HD with assessment and diagnosis. Children concerned will be referred to the Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Specialist Outpatient Clinics of the HA for further diagnosis and treatment as necessary according to their individual needs and family circumstances. Subject to the consent of the parents, assessment reports of the CAS will be sent to schools via the EDB to facilitate school personnel to take note of the educational needs of the children concerned and provide them with timely support.

8. In cases where teachers in public sector primary and secondary schools identify any suspected cases of AD/HD that require professional assessment or consultation, they can refer the students to school-based educational psychologists (EPs) for preliminary assessment and follow-up. In this connection, the EDB, in collaboration with the Department of Psychology and Department of Psychiatry of the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK), has developed a local norm for the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), and the Strengths and Weaknesses of AD/HD—symptoms and Normal-behaviour (SWAN), for early identification of students with AD/HD. The SDQ and SWAN have been made available for use by EPs since 2010. Where necessary, EPs will refer students to psychiatrists for diagnosis and medical treatment. Besides, some child and adolescent psychiatric services under HA also accept direct referrals from schools.

9. The multi-disciplinary professional teams of HA comprising healthcare practitioners in various disciplines, including child psychiatrists, paediatricians, clinical psychologists, nurses, speech therapists and occupational therapists, provide early identification, assessment and treatment services for needy children. In 2011-12, an additional 48 members of the teams including doctors, nurses and allied health professionals had been recruited to the multi-disciplinary teams to provide the service.

SpLD

10. Academics around the world generally share the view that, to ensure the validity of assessment, school children with persistent learning difficulties should be identified and assessed of their reading and writing skills only after they have received formal education for a certain period of time. The EDB has introduced the Early Identification and Intervention of Learning Difficulties Programme for Primary One Pupils since 1985 and made continuous improvement to it. Under the Programme, the EDB provides schools with necessary tools and training. Through the completion of the Observation Checklist for Teachers and the Hong Kong Specific Learning Difficulties Behaviour Checklist (for Primary School Pupils), teachers are able to identify as early as possible Primary One (P1) students with learning

difficulties and arrange early intervention for them. For students whose learning progress remains unsatisfactory despite intervention, they will be referred to EPs for further assessment and support services.

11. Currently, all public sector ordinary primary schools in Hong Kong have complied with the requirements of the EDB and reported to the EDB P1 students identified with learning difficulties. For students who show difficulties in reading and writing only after they have progressed to higher levels, teachers can use the screening tools provided by the EDB to examine their learning difficulties, and refer them to EPs for assessment via their schools where necessary.

12. To further enhance support in identification of students with SpLD, the EDB and three tertiary institutions set up the Hong Kong Specific Learning Difficulties Research Team in 1998. The team has published a number of assessment tools for EPs and screening checklists for teachers. Details are at [Annex 1](#).

Support Services

Medical Services

13. The CAS of the DH provides interim support services for parents, such as talks, workshops and practical training, to help them understand their children so that they can give their children better care and seek early intervention. For diagnosed cases, the CAS will arrange and co-ordinate the necessary rehabilitation services according to individual needs and family conditions of the children.

14. The professional teams of HA provide appropriate treatment and training to children diagnosed with AD/HD, with a view to enhancing their ability in communication, socialization, emotion management, problem solving, learning and life skills, etc. Knowledge about AD/HD is also provided to the parents and carers of children diagnosed with AD/HD in order to enhance their understanding of the symptoms and treatment needs of the children. In addition, HA's professional teams maintain close liaison with related organisations, such as early training centres or schools, to provide appropriate support according to the developmental needs of the children.

Rehabilitation Services

15. SWD provides children with disabilities from birth to six years old, including those with AD/HD, with early intervention through pre-school rehabilitation services, with a view to enhancing their physical, psychological and social developments, thus improving their

opportunities for participating in ordinary schools and daily life activities, and helping their family meet their special needs.

16. The Government has been steadily increasing the provision of pre-school rehabilitation places. Over the past six years, the Government has allocated funding to provide about 1 500 additional places, representing an increase of nearly 30%. There are currently a total of 6 230 pre-school rehabilitation places. SWD anticipates that about 607 additional places will come on stream in 2013-14. Furthermore, the Community Care Fund launched an assistance programme on “Training Subsidy for Children who are on the Waiting List of Subvented Pre-school Rehabilitation Services” in December 2011, with a view to providing training subsidy at a maximum of \$2,500 a month for pre-school children from low-income families who are in need of rehabilitation services, thereby enabling them to receive self-financing services operated by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and facilitating their learning and development. Moreover, SWD, through its District Support Centres for Persons with Disabilities, provides one-stop support and training services for persons with disabilities (including children with disabilities) living in their respective geographical districts to facilitate their integration into the community, and provides training, educational courses, talks, workshops, etc. for their carers so as to enhance their caring ability. In addition, the Parents/Relatives Resource Centre also organises social and recreational activities for parents/carers of children with disabilities to facilitate experience sharing and mutual support.

Education Services

Additional Resources

17. To help public sector primary and secondary schools support their students with SEN, including those with AD/HD and SpLD, the EDB has been providing schools with additional resources on top of the regular subvention for ordinary schools, including Learning Support Grant (LSG), Enhanced Speech Therapy Grant, the Top-up Fund for purchasing special furniture and equipment or carrying out minor conversion work for students with disabilities and provision of additional teachers to cater for the needs of the low academic achievers, etc. For students with severe emotional and behavioural problems who have not shown significant improvement despite provision of support, the EDB will consider providing schools with a time-limited grant where appropriate for schools to employ teaching assistants in order to help the students concerned establish classroom routines. With effect from the 2013/14 school year, the EDB will raise the ceiling of the LSG from \$1 million to \$1.5 million per school per year to strengthen support for schools having admitted a larger number of students with SEN. Schools may pool and flexibly deploy such resources to employ

additional teaching staff or assistants and procure professional services, so as to enhance the learning effectiveness of students with SEN.

Professional Support

18. Educational psychology services are provided for schools to support students with AD/HD, SpLD and other SEN. At the student level, if teachers suspect students to have AD/HD or SpLD, schools may approach EPs direct for arrangement of professional assessment. Upon completion of assessment, the EPs will explain to teachers and parents about the students' SEN at case conferences and discuss with them follow-up actions. Where necessary, students will be referred to other organisations for follow-up services. At the teacher level, EPs help raise teachers' awareness to identification of students with AD/HD and SpLD, and strengthen their support strategies through school-based or district-based teacher training. At the school system level, EPs give professional advice on school policies, measures, teaching strategies, resource deployment as well as home-school co-operation, etc to facilitate early identification and intervention of students with SEN. The EDB is taking steps to extend the School-based Educational Psychology Service progressively to cover all public sector primary and secondary schools by the 2016/17 school year.

19. Besides, school professionals, including resource teachers, school social workers and EPs, also provide support and guidance services for students with learning or adjustment difficulties (including students with AD/HD and SpLD). On top of general support services, schools would, with the assistance of EDB, draw up Individual Education Plan and provide structured support for students with AD/HD who require more intensive support. Should the behavioral and/or adjustment problems of the students persist despite school-based remedial support provided, schools may, upon parental consent, refer the students to the Adjustment Unit for pull-out remedial support provided by EDB.

20. Apart from the services on early identification and intervention mentioned above, the EDB has all along been collaborating with tertiary institutions to develop theory-based and evidence-based teaching model and materials.

21. On the support for students with AD/HD, EDB published a "Development of Executive Skills (DOES) Resource Package" in the 2009/10 school year to strengthen students' executive skills through school-based group training programme in primary schools. We have invited schools to participate in our tier one programme "Enhancing Students' Executive Functioning by Implementing Strategies within Classroom". In this programme, specialists from EDB collaborate with teachers at schools, conduct classroom observations and consultation meetings to facilitate schools to implement support strategies effectively in the classroom settings. The EPs of EDB are currently developing a "Coaching Programme

on Executive Skills” to help secondary school students with AD/HD enhance their self-management ability. About 50 secondary schools have joined the programme. We plan to distribute the relevant teaching kits to all local secondary schools in the next school year.

22. Regarding support for students with SpLD, the EDB invited in 2005 renowned British scholar Dr Rea Reason to make recommendations on education services provided for local students with SpLD. Dr Reason endorsed the EDB’s direction in promoting Whole School Approach (WSA) and teacher training and suggested that Hong Kong should learn from the experiences of Britain and the United States in implementing the Tiered Intervention Model to help students with SpLD.

23. Following up on Dr Reason’s recommendations, the EDB supported and participated in a five-year cross-sector joint project “READ & WRITE: A Jockey Club Learning Support Network” (READ & WRITE Project) to enhance the support services for students with SpLD. As part of the project, the concept of “responsiveness to intervention” to experiment the Tiered Intervention Model was adopted in the teaching of Chinese Language in pilot primary schools between the 2006/07 and 2010/11 school years. Evidence-based teaching resources “悅讀·悅寫意” and computerised assessment tools “香港初小學生讀寫能力測驗” were developed. According to the longitudinal studies conducted by the research team between 2006 and 2009, all students from pilot schools, when compared with those from control schools, showed continuous and relatively more significant improvement in two major domains, that is language proficiency as well as language and cognitive abilities upon receiving Tier-1 quality teaching. For those who had received Tier-2 support (i.e. after-school supplemental group teaching) and Tier-3 support (i.e. individualised support), they also showed significant improvement when compared with students from control schools. These indicate that Tiered Intervention Model and related teaching materials help boost the abilities and performance of students with SpLD in learning Chinese.

24. Building on the READ and WRITE Project, the EDB launched a five-year project on the Tiered Intervention Model on the Learning and Teaching of Chinese Language in Primary Schools (the Model) in the 2011/12 school year. With the support of professionals from EDB, participating schools implement the Model by providing Tier 1 quality teaching to all students, reviewing students’ progress continuously and adjusting the teaching accordingly. For students with greater learning difficulties who show no signs of improvement despite Tier 1 support, schools will provide them with Tier 2 support in the form of small group supplemental teaching or more intensive Tier 3 individualised support. By the 2015/16 school year, we anticipate that some 200 primary schools having participated in the Project should be able to master the techniques adopted in the Model, thereby enabling more students with SpLD to receive early and appropriate intervention.

25. Details about the remedial resources developed by the EDB for supporting students with AD/HD and SpLD are at Annex 2.

Teacher Training

26. Enhancing the professional capacity of teachers in catering for students with SEN is pivotal to the successful implementation of integrated education (IE). From the 2007/08 school year onwards, the EDB has been providing serving teachers with structured training courses on supporting students with SEN pitched at Basic, Advanced and Thematic levels (BAT Courses). The EDB expects each ordinary school to be equipped with a certain number of teachers who have completed the relevant training. Apart from having at least 10% of teachers attending the Basic Course, schools are required to arrange for at least three teachers to attend the Advanced Course, and at least one Chinese language and one English language teacher to attend the Thematic Course on SpLD. For schools having students with AD/HD, at least one teacher should attend the Thematic Course on AD/HD. By the end of the 2011/12 school year, more than 25% of teachers in public sector ordinary schools had received 30 hours or more of structured training on catering for students with SEN (including the BAT Courses or other courses recognised by the EDB). The EDB has further raised the training targets of BAT Courses since the 2012/13 school year with a view to equipping more teachers with the knowledge and skills to support students with SEN.

27. Since the 2006/07 school year, under the READ and WRITE Project, the CUHK has delivered training courses for Chinese language teachers in primary schools with a focus on supporting students with SpLD in reading and writing so that appropriate language teaching can be applied to help the students concerned. More than 4 300 teachers have received the training. Moreover, the EDB also organises from time to time workshops, seminars, talks and experience sharing sessions for school heads, teachers, teaching assistants and parents to enhance their awareness and understanding of students with different types of SEN (including those with SpLD and AD/HD).

28. Expenditures for support services for students with SEN are estimated to be around \$1,020 million in the 2012/13 school year, representing an increase of over 18% as compared to \$860 million in the 2008/09 school year.

Special Examination Arrangements

29. On top of daily learning support, appropriate special examination arrangements (examination accommodations) for students with SEN are required to ensure that they can enjoy equal opportunities in assessments and can show the subject knowledge they have acquired and skills commanded. The EDB published the information leaflet on WSA –

Assessment Principles and Strategies in 2004 and the Guidelines on Special Examination Arrangements for Students with SEN in Internal Assessment in 2009, which set out the general principles and strategies on special internal assessment arrangements, including detailed arrangements for students with AD/HD and SpLD. The information has been uploaded onto the EDB website. In addition, EDB officers organise talks/workshops for schools on a regular basis to assist schools in further fine-tuning their school-based special examination policies and measures.

30. As regards public examinations, the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) has set up the Committee on Special Needs Candidates and the Task Group on Special Examination Arrangements for Candidates with Specific Learning Disabilities (Task Group), each comprising representatives from the EDB, the DH, secondary schools and tertiary institutions. Representatives from Committee on Home-School Cooperation and the Hong Kong Association for Specific Learning Disabilities (HKASLD) have been invited to join the Task Group since the 2008/09 school year. The EDB has been working closely with the HKEAA on special examination arrangements, including giving briefings to parents and schools on the targets, criteria and measures of special examination arrangements at talks organised by the HKEAA, and joining hands with HKEAA to review the special examination arrangements.

31. In response to calls from parents of students with SpLD for additional special examination arrangements, such as scribe and dictate answers, the Task Group of the HKEAA has set up a working group to study the feasibility of using speech to text conversion software or scribe for candidates with severe SpLD. The EDB will take part in the study and discussion of the working group, and will facilitate schools to make necessary arrangements in accordance with the development.

32. Regarding the letter of 15 January 2013 from the HKASLD to the Subcommittee on IE expressing concern over matters relating to applications from students with SpLD for special examination arrangements in public examinations [File Ref: CB(4)352/12-13(01)], a co-ordinated response from the EDB and the HKEAA is at [Annex 3](#). The EDB, the HKEAA and the HKASLD had also held a joint meeting to exchange views on the matter direct in February 2013.

Home-School Co-operation

33. Communication and co-operation between parents and schools are essential when it comes to providing support for students with SEN. To enhance parents' understanding of their roles, the EDB issued and uploaded onto its website the Parent Guide on WSA to IE in the 2008/09 school year, providing parents with information on the procedures for identifying

and assessing different types of SEN, and on various support strategies. We also remind schools about the need to establish a systematic and regular communication mechanism for enhanced communication and co-operation with parents. Schools should also encourage parents to take part in the planning, implementation and evaluation of intervention programmes for their children, for example, inviting parents to case conferences and reporting to them regularly the learning progress of their children, etc.

34. The EDB has strengthened the student guidance service since the 2002/03 school year and currently, all primary schools have student guidance teacher/personnel who support students and their parents individually or through group programmes. To enhance school-based support for parents of children with SpLD, the EDB distributed the “Enhancing the Reading and Writing Skills of Students: A Parent Training Manual” to primary and secondary schools in 2005 to provide schools with materials for organising training courses for parents. The Parent Training Manual has been uploaded onto the website of Hong Kong Education City. In 2013, the EDB also published “Read and Write Made Easy: A Resource Pack for Supporting Upper Primary Students in Reading and Writing (Parents’ copy)” to facilitate schools to organise training courses for parents.

35. Moreover, the EDB conducts workshops on a regular basis for parents of students with SpLD every year. In the 2011/12 school year, the EDB conducted 176 regional or school-based seminars and workshops primarily aiming at enhancing children’s reading and writing skills, which attracted some 1 900 parent participants. In tandem, it also offered school-based workshops on AD/HD to raise parents’ and teachers’ awareness of AD/HD and the intervention techniques available.

Cross-sector Collaboration

36. As mentioned in paragraph 20 above, the EDB has all along been collaborating with tertiary institutions to develop diversified teaching materials to be used by specialists, teachers and parents for strengthening support to students with SEN.

37. To further assist teachers and parents to support students with AD/HD, the EDB works closely with other Government departments and NGOs. In the 2011/12 school year, EDB jointly organised with SWD, HA and NGOs workshops for teachers and talks for parents, and published an information booklet, titled 《家校·加油 — 支援專注力不足／過度活躍症的學生》 for teachers’ and parents’ reference.

38. To enhance public education, the EDB disseminates information on AD/HD and SpLD, as well as the related support strategies and services to schools, teachers, parents and

the general public at public activities such as the Learning and Teaching Expo 2012. Relevant information and teaching kits have also been uploaded onto the EDB website.

Service Effectiveness

Early identification and intervention

39. Currently, the Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Services of the HA provide early identification, assessment and treatment for a total of about 6 000 children with AD/HD. The HA will continue to review and evaluate the effectiveness of and the demand for services targeted at AD/HD cases, in order to ensure that its services can meet the needs in various aspects.

40. The CAS of the DH provides various educational activities for parents of children with SEN, organises or participates in educational seminars for the public. All these help to enhance public awareness of children with SEN. As shown by the post-workshop questionnaires returned by parents, these activities have achieved pleasing results.

41. The EDB sends out questionnaires on the Early Identification and Intervention of Learning Difficulties Programme for Primary One Pupils in March each year to gather teachers' feedback on the implementation of the programme and the difficulties they encountered with a view to further enhancing the programme. At present, all local public sector schools report students with learning difficulties identified in their P1 classes. In the past decade, the number of P1 students identified was increasing on a year-on-year basis. Take the 2011/12 school year as an example, a total of 10 859 students were identified. This reflects parents' and teachers' increased awareness of identifying students with learning difficulties as well as the effectiveness of the existing mechanism for early identification.

42. There has also been a significant increase in the number of students diagnosed with SpLD by EPs. In the 2007/08 school year, there were 7 780 students with SpLD in public sector secondary and primary schools. The number went up to 17 440 in the 2012/13 school year. This reflects that with effective identification mechanism and sustained public education, teachers and parents have gained a better understanding of SpLD, thereby enabling students with SpLD to receive the required support through early identification.

At the School Level

43. Under the School Development and Accountability Framework, schools should be open and transparent in their operation. Schools should establish a regular communication mechanism to help parents learn about school-based support measures for students with SEN,

keep them informed of their children's learning progress and enhance their involvement in supporting their children's learning. On the implementation of the WSA to IE, schools are required to give details about their IE policies, resources allocated for that purpose and support measures for students with SEN in their annual reports, school websites and/or school profiles. A sample report is available at the Operation Guide on the WSA to IE for schools' reference. Moreover, the EDB officers will continue to monitor and advise schools on their efforts to achieve openness and transparency through regular school visits and year-end reviews. The EDB will also remind schools of the importance of and ways to enhance openness and transparency.

44. As observed by the EDB during regular school visits and on the basis of information collected from schools' year-end self-evaluation reports, schools in general have put in place mechanisms for planning, implementing and evaluating support services for students with SEN. As revealed in schools' self-evaluation reports, students with SEN have shown improvements in their social adjustment, learning performance and learning attitude. Home-school co-operation has also been reinforced, while an inclusive culture and the spirit of the WSA have gradually taken roots in schools.

At the system level

45. The EDB has assessed the effectiveness of its support strategies through different and diversified channels. For example, for the support rendered to students with AD/HD, EPs will liaise closely with the student support teams in schools, monitor students' progress regularly and modify support strategies when necessary. Before and after the implementation of the Coaching Programme on Executive Skills, the EDB invited participating students, teachers and parents to complete behaviour checklists to evaluate the programme effectiveness. Data collected showed that all participating students have made improvement in their executive skills.

46. To support students with SpLD, the EDB has been progressively promoting the evidence-based Tiered Intervention Model on the Learning and Teaching of Chinese Language in Junior Primary Schools since the 2011/12 school year. According to the observations of EDB's support staff and the data on students' performance, participating teachers have become more confident and competent in modifying the curriculum to meet students' diverse individual needs and this in turn has brought improvement to students' abilities to read and write.

47. The EDB has kept the implementation of IE under ongoing review and introduced improvements wherever necessary and practicable. In 2005, the EDB set up the Task Force on IE in Mainstream Schools, which comprises representatives from the school sector, tertiary

institutions, other government departments, NGOs and parent groups. Through regular meetings with the Task Force, the EDB updates its members on the latest progress of implementing IE and seeks their views on improvement measures. At the meeting held in December 2012, the Task Force expressed their recognition of the efforts made by the EDB and schools, with which the implementation of IE is beginning to bear fruit. The EDB is fully aware of the challenges that the implementation of IE may bring. We will continue to collaborate with the education sector to enable the students with SEN to receive more appropriate support.

Advice Sought

48. Members are invited to note the content of this paper.

Education Bureau
April 2013

Assessment and Screening tools published by the Hong Kong Specific Learning Difficulties Research Team set up by the EDB and tertiary institutions

For the screening and assessment of students with specific learning difficulties in reading and writing (SpLD):

For use by teachers

1. The Hong Kong Behaviour Checklist of Specific Learning Difficulties in Reading and Writing for Primary School Students (First Edition, 2002; Second Edition, 2009): Teachers can make use of this checklist to identify primary school students at risk for SpLD.
2. The Hong Kong Test of Chinese Reading and Writing Abilities Assessment for Secondary School Students: for use by teachers to identify students at risk for SpLD and evaluate their strengths and weaknesses in reading and writing abilities, so as to formulate appropriate support and assessment accommodation measures for these students.
3. The Hong Kong Behaviour Checklist of Specific Learning Difficulties in Reading and Writing for Junior Secondary School Students: for use by secondary school teachers in the screening of junior secondary school students at risk for SpLD.

For use by psychologists

1. The Hong Kong Test of Specific Learning Difficulties in Reading and Writing for Primary School Students (First Edition, 2000; Second Edition, 2007): for use by psychologists in the assessment of primary school students with SpLD.
2. The Hong Kong Test of Specific Learning Difficulties in Reading and Writing for Junior Secondary School Students (First Edition, 2007; Second Edition, 2012): for use by psychologists in the assessment of junior secondary school students with SpLD.

Resources developed by the EDB for teachers and student guidance personnel on helping students with AD/HD and SpLD

- A multi-media CD-ROM to promote teachers' awareness, early identification and teaching strategies of SpLD (Chinese version only) (2001)
- “Fun With Reading and Writing” - a resource package on helping students with SpLD (2002)
- A computerized training kit of Chinese word learning for children with specific learning difficulties in Hong Kong (Chinese version only) (First Edition, 2003 ; Second Edition, 2008)
- “Rebuilding our Word Planet”(R.O.W.) (2005)
- Enhancing the Reading and Writing Skills of Students: A Parent Training Manual (Chinese Version only) (2005)
- “Overcoming the Barrier: a Guide for Teachers on Helping Secondary School Students with Specific Learning Difficulties” CD ROM (Chinese version only) (2009)
- “Development of Executive Skills (DOES)” a resource package to support primary school students with AD/HD by enhancing their executive skills (2010)
- “Read and Write Made Easy: A Resource Pack for Supporting Junior Secondary Students in Chinese Reading and Writing” (Chinese version only) (2010)
- “Fun with Maths: A Resource Pack for Supporting Primary School Students in Mathematics” (Chinese version only) (2010)
- “Read and Write Made Easy: A Resource Pack for Supporting Upper Primary Students in Chinese Reading and Writing (Parent Version)” (Chinese version only) (2013)

**Legislative Council Panel on Education
Subcommittee on Integrated Education**

**Students with specific learning difficulties in reading and writing
applying for special examination arrangements in public examinations**

In response to the issues of concern raised in the letter of the Hong Kong Association for Specific Learning Disabilities (the Association) (ref. no. CB(4)352/12-13(01)) dated 15 January 2013 to the Subcommittee on Integrated Education, this paper is a consolidated reply with inputs and information provided by the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA).

**Application procedures for special examination arrangements and the
arrangements of schools
(Response to concerns numbered 1 & 6)**

2. In order to ensure fairness and equity for all candidates, including those with special educational needs (SEN) and those without, in public examinations, students with SEN (including the students with specific learning difficulties in reading and writing¹ (SpLD)/dyslexia) are required to provide supporting documents for processing by the responsible authority when they apply for special examination arrangements (SEA). Similar requirements are found in countries like the U.K., U.S, and Australia, etc. in the application process and procedures for SEA.

3. Regarding the application of students with SEN (including students with SpLD) for SEA in public examinations, the HKEAA has provided guidelines to assist schools and parents to acquire the essential information for the application. Detailed application procedures (including the application deadline) and the supporting documents required are clearly spelt out in the Application Guide which has been uploaded to the website of the HKEAA and the HKDSE Examination Online Services. The Application Guide is reviewed regularly. In addition to the Application Guide, the HKEAA has made use of circulars to schools, briefing sessions to schools and parents,

¹ Specific learning disabilities used by the HK Association for Specific Learning Disabilities is synonymous with specific learning difficulties in reading and writing (SpLD) or dyslexia adopted by the Education Bureau.

leaflets on SEA, enquiry hotlines and the SEN Online Services (for schools and private candidates) to facilitate schools / parents to have better understanding of the application procedures, and to disseminate the latest information to them.

4. As to application for SEA, schools are required by the HKEAA to assign at least one staff member to be the SEA application officer to handle the applications for their SEN students. When submitting the applications to the HKEAA, the school / SEA application officer has the responsibility to ensure that the information provided is complete and correct. All the applications have to be reviewed and endorsed by the school principals before submitting to the HKEAA. If the information submitted by the schools is found to be incomplete or incorrect, the HKEAA will take immediate follow-up action with the schools to ensure that all applications will be handled in a timely manner. The HKEAA will ensure interest of candidates with SEN is not jeopardized due to any oversight of the schools.

5. Besides, the Guidelines of the Education Bureau (EDB) on “Special Examination Arrangements for students with Special Educational Needs in Internal Assessment” and the “Operation Guide on the Whole School Approach to Integrated Education” have specific sections on application for SEA in public examinations. They have been uploaded to the webpage of EDB for the reference of teachers and parents. EDB invites teachers to attend annual territory-wide seminars on SEA and educational psychologists (EPs) also deliver school-based teacher development sessions to facilitate teachers to have a more in-depth understanding of SEA. EPs and inspectors of the Special Education Sections will also remind schools in a timely manner when they visit the schools to apply for SEA in public examinations for students with needs.

**Review arrangements for students with SpLD/dyslexia and the assessment / review reports
(Response to concerns numbered 2, 4 & 5)**

6. At present, psychologists administer the ‘Hong Kong Test of Specific Learning Difficulties in Reading and Writing for Primary School Students’ and the ‘Hong Kong Test of Specific Learning Difficulties in Reading and Writing for Junior Secondary School Students’ developed and published by the Hong Kong Specific Learning Difficulties Research Team² (HKSpLD Research

² In order to strengthen the identification and support for students with SpLD, EDB formed the Hong

Team) for the assessment of students with SpLD in primary and secondary schools respectively. Since they are two different sets of assessment tool measuring slightly different literacy and cognitive abilities, there are isolated students whose deficits met the diagnostic criteria in primary schools but do not fulfill the diagnostic criteria when they are reviewed in secondary schools. Moreover, there are students who are classified as marginal SpLD cases in primary schools and continue not to meet the diagnostic criteria when they are reviewed in the secondary school according to the eligibility criteria of the assessment. Regarding such situations, psychologists will integrate other information, including the results of the Hong Kong Test of Chinese Reading and Writing Abilities Assessment for Secondary School Students (for use of teachers) (2007) developed by the Chinese University of Hong Kong with norms for S1, S3 and S5 students under the commission of the EDB, the learning performance and progress of the students, the difficulties they encountered in the learning process, the effects of the support measures, etc. to make professional judgment on the learning needs and SEA of the students. As for the individual cases mentioned in the letter of the Association, the EDB and the HKEAA have contacted the parents and schools to understand the situations and duly rendered follow up on them.

7. Besides, based on the views gathered from the psychologists who administer the tests on SpLD and incorporation of the latest research findings, EDB collaborated with the tertiary institution to revise the assessment tool. The Hong Kong Test of Specific Learning Difficulties in Reading and Writing for Junior Secondary School Students (second edition) was launched in February 2012 to sharpen the accuracy of the test in assessing the learning needs of students.

8. At present, schools submitting applications for SEA for candidates with SpLD should attach an assessment/review report furnished by a psychologist. The HKEAA has set out in the Application Guide the information required in the reports from which psychologists can make reference when preparing reports for students with SpLD. EDB has periodically reminded all psychologists (including the psychologists employed

Kong Specific Learning Difficulties Research Team with the University of Hong Kong, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, and the Hong Kong Institute of Education in 1998 (<http://web.hku.hk/~hksld>). The membership comprises an educational psychologist from the EDB and experts from the afore-mentioned tertiary institutions. The products of the research team include assessment tools on SpLD with local norms for the use of psychologists, and screening checklists on SpLD and resource materials for teachers.

in the School-based Educational Psychology Service) to adhere to consistent procedures and criteria in reviewing students and in drafting reports, as well as to beware of the points to note.

9. In consideration of the concern of the Association for the assessment /review services of psychologists, EDB clarified with the EPs the objectives of review, eligibility criteria and work flow for the review of students for SEA in public examinations in the briefing session on the release of the Hong Kong Test of Specific Learning Difficulties in Reading and Writing for Junior Secondary School Students (second edition) in February 2012 and in the staff development session for EPs in April of the same year. EDB also reminded EPs to accord to the request of schools to render re-assessment for students who were formerly classified as marginal SpLD or non-SpLD but who still have much difficulty in literacy learning. EDB will continue to remind EPs in the regular briefing sessions of the work procedures and points to note when needed.

10. As for some parents lacking knowledge on qualified assessment institutions, we wish to point out that under the prevailing mechanism, public sector schools can refer students with needs to EPs provided directly by EDB or school sponsoring bodies for assessment. Students in other schools can receive assessment from other qualified psychologists. The HKSpLD Research Team has uploaded the list of qualified psychologists who have given consent to disclose their names and email addresses on its website when it launched the local assessment tools for the easy reference of the parents. The related information was also conveyed to the HKEAA and the Association. In order to enable the members of the Association to verify the list of qualified psychologists, the EDB has added a link to the web page of the FAQ of the “Parent Guide on the Whole School Approach to Integrated Education” .

**Recommendation of candidates with SpLD/dyslexia for SEA
(Response to concerns numbered 3 & 7)**

11. The Task Group on Special Examination Arrangements for Candidates with SLD (Task Group) is set up to advise the HKEAA on the policies and guidelines for processing SEA applications from SpLD candidates. It consists of school principals, representatives from tertiary institutions, parent representatives and educational / clinical psychologists. Since the 2008/09

school year, a representative from the Association sits in the Task Group to reflect the views of the Association on the eligibility criteria and the procedures for the application of SEA. As the Task Group also endorses recommendations on each year's applications, the Association can reflect their concerns and views to the HKEAA in a timely manner.

12. When candidates with SpLD apply for SEA, the school, parent, candidate and the qualified psychologist have to complete the relevant parts and sign on the application form to ensure that the application is a joint decision of the related stakeholders. For each SEA application, the HKEAA will issue an acknowledgment letter (to the school for school candidate) to acknowledge receipt of the application and a notification letter (to be sent to both the school and the candidate) informing them of the results of the application.

13. Expert Panels are formed under the Task Group to make recommendation on the applications of candidates with SpLD for SEA. Members of the Expert Panels consist of school principals and educational / clinical psychologists. In contemplating the applications, the Expert Panels will consider the assessment results and clinical judgment provided in the reports of the psychologists, as well as the integrated information provided by the schools. If necessary, the Expert Panels may request additional documents from the school or psychologist concerned to support the application. Therefore, the Expert Panels will not draw a conclusion solely based on the scores in the assessment results.

14. Candidates who are not satisfied with the outcome of their applications may appeal against the decision of the Task Group. All cases will be re-considered by the independent Appeal Panel for Special Needs Candidates and its decision will be final. The Appeal Panel consists of professional from the Department of Health, EP, representatives from schools and parent representative. The procedures for appeals and the enquiry hotline are clearly set out in the letters for the information of schools and parents as mentioned in para. 12 above. Parents may contact the schools for follow-up on the application status and results if in doubt.

15. In fact, the number of rejected SEA applications from candidates with SpLD is very low (an average of a few cases a year). The rejected cases in

general do not fulfill the objective criteria stated in the Application Guide of the HKEAA, for example, the candidates have not received assessment on tests of SpLD with local norms or the psychologist has clearly classified the candidate as a non-SpLD case.

16. All along, the EDB and the HKEAA have maintained communication with the Association on matters related to application of students with SpLD for SEA, so as to enable parents to have clear understanding about the related arrangement. The EDB and the HKEAA met with the Association on 1 February 2013 to clarify once again how the system will be further improved. The Task Group of the HKEAA has recently reviewed the Application Guide and the application form for students with SpLD with a view to addressing the concerns of the Association / parents. The revised application form is expected to be used in September 2013 for the application for SEA and schools will be informed of the details in the circular to be issued in July or August, 2013. Candidates and parents may also refer to the announcements in the HKEAA website.

**Support for Direct Subsidy Scheme schools
(Response to concern numbered 8)**

17. Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) schools have the same responsibility as other public sector schools to provide appropriate support for the students with SEN. As the amount of subsidy for DSS schools is calculated based on the average unit cost of an aided school place, the additional resources which EDB provides for schools to support the students with SEN, such as Learning Support Grant (LSG), School-based Educational Psychology Services, Enhanced Speech Therapy Grant, the additional teachers provided under the Integrated Education (IE) Programme and Intensive Remedial Teaching Programme in primary schools, the additional teachers to support academically low achievers, etc., have already been subsumed into the DSS subsidy. In other words, DSS schools have already been provided with resources to cater for their students with SEN. If parents have any questions about individual cases, they may seek assistance from the respective Regional Education Offices of EDB direct.

**Enhancing the public's understanding of SpLD/dyslexia
(Response to concern numbered 9)**

18. EDB has highly recognized the importance of public education in promoting the implementation of integrated education (IE). In recent years we have made use of different media and means to let the public and the parents have an understanding of IE, including the regular issue of an online newsletter (融情) since May 2009 to release the latest information on IE. In the 2008/09 school year, the EDB, Department of Health and Radio Television Hong Kong jointly produced a series of 10 television programmes "Parenting", telling the real-life experiences of parents in taking care of their children with SEN so that the public can have a better understanding of different types of SEN. Also in 2011 and 2012, we participated in the Learning & Teaching Expo organised by the Hong Kong Education City during which we introduced to the public and the school sector the support strategies employed by schools in implementing IE.

19. Based on our communication with schools and observation, schools are supportive of IE. We are pleased to see the progress made in IE through the efforts of different stakeholders. The EDB will continue to enhance the publicity and information dissemination through different activities so as to promote the concept of inclusion and deepen the understanding of the public and their acceptance of students with SEN (including students with SpLD/dyslexia) for the nurturing of a caring and inclusive society.

Advice sought

20. Members are invited to note the contents of this paper.

The Education Bureau
The Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority

April 2013