

For information

Legislative Council Panel on Education

Subcommittee on Integrated Education

**Response to Views and Concerns Raised
at the Meetings on 30 April and 27 May 2013**

Purpose

At the request of the Subcommittee, this paper sets out the Administration's response to the views and concerns on the implementation of integrated education (IE) raised by Members and related parties at the meetings on 30 April and 27 May 2013.

Response to Views and Concerns

2. On 27 May 2013, the Education Bureau (EDB) has already responded to the views and concerns expressed by Members and related parties on the implementation of IE at the meeting on 30 April 2013. At the request of the Subcommittee, we now furnish a consolidated response to the views and concerns further expressed by Members and related parties at the meeting on 27 May 2013.

Identification of Students with Special Educational Needs (SEN)

3. The Government has been making efforts through various channels for the early identification and assessment of children suspected of having developmental disorders. The 31 Maternal and Child Health Centres (MCHCs) under the Department of Health (DH) provides Developmental Surveillance Scheme services for children aged 0-5 across the territory. When children have reached the specified crucial ages, health professionals of MCHCs will conduct developmental surveillance interviews with parents and observation on the children to monitor their development (usually when attending for vaccination). This covers various developmental areas, including gross and fine motor, language and communication, social behaviour and play, self-care, vision and hearing, etc. The DH also offers relevant guidance to parents through the dissemination of booklets on child development and parenting and other information. If parents have any query or worry before the next scheduled visit, they can make an appointment to discuss with the health professionals any time.

4. In addition, a referral and reply system has been developed under the Comprehensive Child Development Service (CCDS) and implemented in all pre-primary institutions since 2008. With consent of parents, teachers of pre-primary institutions can refer pre-primary children suspected of having health, developmental and behavioural problems to the MCHCs direct in the respective district for preliminary assessment. If necessary, these children will be referred to the Child Assessment Service of the DH or the Hospital Authority (HA) for detailed assessment and further follow-up actions, including referral for placement in appropriate treatment, rehabilitation training and special education support services, etc.

5. The DH, EDB and Social Welfare Department (SWD) have also developed and distributed the Pre-primary Children Development and Behaviour Management – Teacher Resource Kit to all pre-primary institutions for their teachers' reference. It aims to enhance pre-primary teachers' understanding of the referral system as well as their knowledge about children development and how to identify and handle common developmental problems of pre-school children. With EDB's assistance, the DH also issues to parents of pre-school children an information pamphlet - Understanding Your Child's Development – For Parents of Preschool Children, which sets out the expected behaviour and performance of pre-school children together with signs of potential problems in development. From time to time, the DH also takes part in training programmes organised by the EDB and other institutions for pre-primary teachers. Parents who have concerns about the development of their children may discuss with teachers of pre-primary institutions and seek referral.

6. The DH is keeping a close watch on the demand for MCHC service. Currently, over 90% of the MCHCs are able to arrange children suspected of having developmental disorder to receive preliminary assessment by MCHC doctors within a month or two. For individual MCHCs with longer waiting time, early follow-up may be arranged for individual children depending on their needs.

7. The Administration is well aware of the need to give timely pre-school training to children with special needs. Over the past six years, the Administration has allocated funding to provide about 1 500 additional places, representing an increase of nearly 30%. The SWD currently provides a total of 6 230 pre-school rehabilitation places. It is anticipated that about 607 additional places will come on stream in 2013-14. Furthermore, the Community Care Fund has implemented the assistance programme on Training Subsidy for Children who are on the Waiting List of Subvented Pre-school Rehabilitation Services since December 2011, with a view to providing training subsidy 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.

8. The EDB attaches great importance to appropriate early intervention in the first place, and requires teachers to determine students' needs for assessment through observing and evaluating their progress with respect to the intervention they receive. The procedures to take are summarised as follows:

- At the start of the school term, schools distribute to parents of all Primary One pupils a leaflet entitled Early Identification and Intervention of Learning Difficulties Programme for Primary One Pupils (EII Programme), which sets out clearly the workflow and timeline of early identification for stakeholders to have an understanding of the arrangements involved.
- Under the current mechanism of the above EII Programme, teachers complete the checklists for pupils in December. Based on the results of the checklists, educational psychologists (EPs) or their assistants discuss with schools on the learning needs of individual pupils so that schools can arrange early intervention for them.
- EPs or their assistants conduct assessment for pupils with severe learning difficulties during their Primary One year. As for those with mild learning difficulties, after receiving intervention, their learning progress is reviewed at P2 to determine their need for assessment or other follow-up actions.
- The EDB requires EPs to complete the assessment for students within nine months upon receipt of the cases. In the 2011/12 school year, about 80% of the cases referred to EPs were assessed within two months and about 90% within five months. The remaining cases with a longer waiting time for assessment were often due to some specific circumstances. For example, there were cases in which parents requested to defer the assessment and cases in which the assessment had to be held up pending the students' medical treatment. Some parents may have mistaken the commencement date of the EII Programme procedure for the date of referral to EPs for assessment, thus giving rise to a misconceived impression that there is a long waiting time for EP assessment.

9. Furthermore, under the prevailing mechanism, the EDB provides public sector primary and secondary schools with educational psychology and related assessment services. Schools may refer students in need to EPs provided directly by the EDB or school sponsoring bodies (SSB) for assessment. For students in other schools, assessment may be provided by other qualified psychologists.

10. After assessment of the students, EPs provide their parents with an Assessment Summary which sets out the overall test findings together with recommendations on follow-up actions for parents' easy reference. EPs usually prepare assessment reports that incorporate information gathered from various parties in the post-assessment meetings with teachers and parents. They also remind parents of the procedure to apply for a copy of the report. Since EPs have to prepare assessment reports based on the circumstances of individual cases and professional views, it is impossible for the reports to be standardised in content and layout.

11. At present, schools submitting applications for special examination arrangements for candidates with specific learning difficulties in reading and writing (SpLD) should attach an assessment/review report prepared by a psychologist. The Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) has set out in the Application Guide the information required in the reports from which psychologists can draw reference when preparing reports for students with SpLD. The EDB has also regularly reminded all psychologists (including those employed under the School-based Educational Psychology Service (SBEPS)) of the points to note in preparing reports and conducting reviews, and that consistency in procedures and criteria should be observed.

12. As detailed assessment reports contain personal data of the students, parents who want to obtain a copy of the report is required to fill in a form in accordance with the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance. Details about how to obtain a copy of the assessment report are set out in the parental consent form for educational psychology service. Parents are also reminded of the procedures in the Parent Guide on the Whole School Approach (WSA) to IE.

13. For students suspected of having Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD), schools would refer them to EPs for assessment. After which, EPs would arrange for a meeting with both the school staff concerned and parents of the students to explain the assessment findings and discuss about the intervention arrangements. If necessary, EPs would refer the cases to psychiatrists for diagnosis. The EDB accepts assessment reports for "suspected cases" identified by EPs and provides schools with additional resources (Learning Support Grant (LSG)) so that they can support students with AD/HD soonest possible. Upon receipt of the letter of diagnosis by psychiatrists, the schools further examine the support arrangements in order to provide the most appropriate service.

14. Under the triage system for new cases at the psychiatric specialist outpatient (SOP) clinics of the HA, new patients' clinical history and major symptoms are examined to determine the urgency of the patients' clinical conditions in order to arrange the date of medical appointment. New referral cases are usually first screened by a nurse and then reviewed by a specialist doctor of the relevant specialty before being classified according to

the following categories: priority 1 (urgent) cases, priority 2 (semi-urgent) cases and routine cases. To ensure patients with urgent medical needs are given timely treatment, the targets of the HA are to maintain the average waiting time for priority 1 and priority 2 cases within two and eight weeks respectively. As at 31 December 2012, the HA could achieve such targets in general.

15. In providing SOP services for children with AD/HD, case doctors determine the consultation time on the basis of individual patients' clinical needs and conditions. In general, case doctors spend 60 minutes on a new case. For subsequent follow-up cases, consultation time varies depending on patients' actual conditions. Apart from the treatment available at SOP clinics, children with AD/HD may also be referred to other appropriate services, such as clinical psychology and speech therapy services, according to their clinical requirement. To cope with acute doctor manpower and workload issues, the HA has advertised on its Internet homepage and the newspapers earlier on for the recruitment of non-local doctors for specialties under greater manpower pressure, including psychiatry. In tandem, the HA will continue to make a determined effort to recruit fully registered local doctors.

16. The EDB is aware of the keen demand for EP service from students with SEN. Accordingly, the EDB has been progressively extending the SBEPS and increasing the number of EPs as planned so that more schools can benefit from this comprehensive support service. In the 2012/13 school year, 530 public sector primary and secondary schools have been receiving the service, representing about 60% of the public sector schools in the territory. We anticipate that the SBEPS will cover all public sector primary and secondary schools by the 2016/17 school year.

17. To step up support for students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) attending ordinary school, the EDB launched a Pilot Project on Enhancement of Support Services for Students with ASD in the 2011/12 school year. The pilot project comprises two parts. For the first part, NGOs are commissioned by the EDB to provide participating schools with three-year structured add-on group training for students with ASD, covering areas like social cognition, communication, emotion management and learning skills, with a view to facilitating their academic and social integration into school. As for the second part, a tiered support model is developed and piloted in 30 primary schools to support students with ASD systematically. School staff are supported to provide comprehensive support for junior primary students with ASD on the developmental, preventive and remedial dimensions. The consolidated knowledge and experience gained from the project will be compiled into an operation manual for dissemination to all primary schools in Hong Kong upon completion of the project.

Schools Implementing IE

18. In accordance with the Disability Discrimination Ordinance (DDO) and the Code of Practice on Education, it is unlawful for educational establishments to discriminate against a person with a disability. Schools cannot refuse admitting students on grounds of their disabilities. Accordingly, all educational establishments have to provide equal educational opportunity to eligible students, including those with SEN. Currently, the Government is adopting a dual-track mode in implementing special education. Subject to the assessment and recommendation of specialists and with parents' consent, the EDB refers students with severe or multiple disabilities to special schools for intensive support services. Other students with SEN may attend ordinary schools. Students with SEN attending ordinary schools are mostly able to cope with the mainstream curriculum and learn together with other students in class. Under the prevailing mechanism, if they cannot adapt to schooling in ordinary schools and are assessed by specialists as suitable for education in special schools, the EDB makes placement arrangements for them accordingly. To facilitate their studies, the EDB encourages schools to adopt the 3-Tier Intervention Model to provide additional support for students with SEN in accordance with their individual needs. The levels of intervention are adjusted based on students' progress and needs as shown in their formative and summative assessments.

19. For students in ordinary schools who are in need of Tier-3 individualised support, we request schools to draw up individual education plans (IEPs) for them and follow up regularly. For other students with SEN, schools are required to record the support and adaptations offered as well as students' performance and progress for regular review and adjustment of the level of intervention required. In other words, schools have been providing appropriate support and follow-up for all students with SEN under the prevailing mechanism. If schools are required to formulate a comprehensive IEP for each student with SEN, we have to be mindful of the need to strike a balance between teachers' workload and the effectiveness of the proposed measure in further enhancing the support already provided. As a matter of fact, the EDB has been providing various kinds of additional resources for schools admitting students with SEN. Schools may pool and deploy the resources flexibly to conduct small group or individual teaching with regard to students' needs so as to enhance the learning and teaching effectiveness.

20. As regards enhancing the monitoring of schools in their implementation of IE, please see paragraph 22 below.

Provision of Resources

21. To help schools cater for students with SEN, the EDB has been providing public sector primary and secondary schools with additional resources on top of the regular subvention for all ordinary schools. These include the LSG calculated according to the number of students with SEN and the tier of support required, Enhanced Speech Therapy Grant, and additional teachers and funding under the Integrated Education Programme and Intensive Remedial Teaching Programme, etc. In recent years, continuous improvement in assessment tools coupled with increased awareness of SEN among teachers and parents have led to a constant rise in the number of students in ordinary schools identified to have SEN. With effect from the 2013/14 school year, the ceiling of the LSG will be raised from \$1 million to \$1.5 million per school per annum. Under the enhancement measure, more abundant resources will be made available to schools with an intake of a larger number of students with SEN. It is worth noting that resources available for supporting students with SEN in a school are not confined to the LSG. Schools may pool and flexibly deploy the LSG and other school-based resources to employ additional teaching staff and assistants or procure professional services (including professional support offered by NGOs and the private sector), so as to provide better support for students with SEN. Having regard to the needs of their students, schools may also provide targeted support, including school-based occupational therapy, for their students. Students in need of occupational therapy may also apply for such service from the HA upon medical referral. In addition, schools may apply for the Top-up Fund to obtain additional provision for purchasing special furniture and equipment or carrying out minor conversion works for students with disabilities.

22. Under the School Development and Accountability Framework, schools are required to assess the effectiveness of their support for students with SEN through self-evaluation each year, just similar to other school policies and measures. The EDB also requires schools to submit a self-evaluation report on the implementation of the WSA to IE at the end of a school year. To further enhance transparency, schools are required to set out in their reports how resources are deployed to provide support services for students with SEN. Moreover, the EDB arranges for its professional staff to conduct regular school visits and annual reviews, and organise training and sharing sessions for schools to ensure the effective deployment of resources for supporting students with SEN. In a nutshell, accountability and monitoring mechanisms are in place to keep in view how IE is implemented and how resources are deployed to render support to students with SEN.

23. All along, the EDB has encouraged schools to adopt a WSA in implementing IE and form student support teams to coordinate various support measures to address learner

diversity. In the 2008/09 school year, the EDB created a deputy headship post in primary schools, the duties of which are, among others, to steer and coordinate efforts to support students with SEN. In fact, the EDB has advised primary and secondary schools to assign their vice-principals to lead and coordinate the task for effective engagement of the teaching force in implementing IE. Schools may also consider deploying their manpower as appropriate so that senior teachers are designated to assist their principals and vice-principals in coordinating and implementing the WSA to IE.

24. When students with severe emotional and adjustment difficulties do not show significant improvement despite school-based remedial support provided, we will, upon parental consent, refer them as necessary to the Adjustment Unit run by the EDB or short-term adjustment programmes run by schools for social development for pull-out remedial support. For schools with particularly difficult hardcore cases of students with severe SEN, we will consider providing them with a time-limited additional grant where appropriate for employing temporary teaching assistants to cater for individual students requiring imminent intensive support.

Professional Support

25. As mentioned in paragraph 16 above, in the 2012/13 school year, about 60% of the public sector primary and secondary schools are receiving the SBEPS. We will extend the service on a year-on-year basis, with a target of covering all public sector primary and secondary schools by the 2016/17 school year. Under the SBEPS, each EP serves about six to ten schools. EPs make regular visits to schools to provide them with comprehensive service at three levels, namely school system, teacher support and student support, to meet the needs of both schools and their students. In the 2011/12 school year, the EDB completed a review of the SBEPS regarding its effectiveness. It was found that the SBEPS had been very effective in its support for students and teachers since its launch in the 2008/09 school year.

26. To ensure that EPs are equipped with necessary professional qualifications, since the 2008/09 school year, the EDB has required all EPs employed with its funding must be a registered member of either the Division of Educational Psychology of the Hong Kong Psychological Society or an equivalent internationally recognised professional organisation of Educational Psychology and subject to the regulation of the relevant Code of Professional Conduct. To qualify for membership of the Division of Educational Psychology of the Hong Kong Psychological Society, a psychologist must fulfil the relevant requirements for professional training and practicum hours. In addition, a psychologist must also be professionally recognised by relevant organisation(s) before being allowed to use some key local assessment tools.

27. Under the prevailing mechanism, public sector primary and secondary schools may refer students with needs to EPs provided directly by the EDB or SSBs for assessment. Students in other schools may receive assessment from other qualified psychologists. Similar to other service arrangements, the Government neither directly regulates the professional services of private organisations/NGOs nor their charges. If a school engages the professional services of a private organisation/NGO, a mechanism must be put in place to monitor the service quality and effectiveness. Where necessary, the EDB also provides professional advice to schools. Meanwhile, to ensure that assessment tools are used only by qualified psychologists, the EDB discusses and draws up relevant vetting and registration systems for such users with collaborating research organisations in their joint efforts to develop local psychological assessment tools. Particulars of psychologists eligible for using such assessment tools will be made public where appropriate. For example, in launching its local assessment tools for SpLD, the Hong Kong Specific Learning Difficulties Research Team (HKSpLD Research Team) has uploaded onto its website a list of registered users with prior consent for disclosure of their names and email addresses for easy reference of the parents. The EDB has also added a link to the Team's webpage to the online version of the Parent Guide on the WSA to IE.

28. To tie in with the extension of SBEPs, training places for EP (Professional Practice) have been increased since the 2009/10 school year. Presently, there are 15 or 25 graduates each year, which are more than the some 20 graduates produced in alternate years in the past.

29. With regard to the training of speech therapists (STs), the University of Hong Kong offers a programme on Speech and Hearing Sciences. Training places of the programme have been increased to 48 in this academic year from 40 a year in the past. The EDB will continue to monitor the demand and supply of STs so as to ensure that students are provided with responsive service.

30. Cross-sector collaboration is one of the basic principles upheld by the EDB in the implementation of IE. In fact, the EDB has all along maintained close liaison with NGOs. In addition to joining hands in developing diversified teaching and remedial resources, the EDB and NGOs have also co-organised a large variety of promotional activities and held meetings as necessary to enhance communication. As mentioned in paragraph 21 above, the policy of the EDB at present is to provide additional resources, professional support and teacher training directly to schools to facilitate them to implement the WSA to cater for students' different needs. Schools are given the flexibility to deploy the LSG, together with other school-based resources, to procure professional services having regard to the needs of their students, for the purpose of strengthening their professional capacity in catering for students with SEN through the support of outside professional knowledge and services (including occupational therapy service) from other sectors (including NGOs and private

organisations). The proposal of offering subsidies to parents/students in the form of vouchers for individual students to receive services from organisations outside their school not only goes against the spirit of WSA but also causes problems in monitoring and assuring the quality and effectiveness of the services. Furthermore, students in need of occupational therapy may seek such service from the HA upon medical referral.

31. As for needy families of students with SEN which meet the eligibility criteria for the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA), if the students are provided with related medical proof (such as recommendations from medical practitioners of public hospitals/clinics for the purchase or repair of rehabilitation devices or medical items), they may also apply for special grant from the SWD to meet the expenses of necessary personal medical supplies. For children assessed by medical practitioners or professionals as suffering from a particular disability, such as physical disability or visual impairment, they are provided with the necessary healthcare, rehabilitation and educational services by the HA, DH, SWD and EDB according to their respective scopes of services. The EDB has also made available a Top-up Fund. If necessary, schools may apply for additional cash grant to purchase special furniture and equipment (such as Braille and CCTV magnifier) for students with disabilities on a non-means tested basis to cater for their learning needs.

Professional Training for Teachers

32. The EDB concurs that the successful implementation of IE hinges heavily on teachers' professional capacity. In this connection, the EDB has commissioned tertiary institutions to offer structured training courses on supporting students with SEN pitched at Basic, Advanced and Thematic levels (BAT Courses) with a view to enhancing teachers' professional capacity in catering for students with SEN since the 2007/08 school year. Moreover, with funding from the University Grants Committee (UGC), the Hong Kong Institute of Education has also been offering relevant part-time training courses on a regular basis. In tandem, the EDB encourages local tertiary institutions to offer structured training courses on special education and related topics to meet teachers' training needs. The number of teachers who have received training on special education through the various means mentioned above has increased progressively. By the end of the 2011/12 school year, more than 25% teachers serving in ordinary schools had completed 30 hours or more of the above structured training courses on supporting students with SEN. These teachers could share the acquired knowledge and skills with their fellow colleagues, play a leading role in implementing the WSA to IE, and provide appropriate support to students with SEN.

33. Noting the sector's recognition of the value and effectiveness of the training courses, the EDB continues to offer the BAT Courses for teachers starting from the 2012/13 school year. In the meantime, we have revised the training targets to be achieved by public sector

ordinary schools by the end of the 2014/15 school year as follows: (i) at least 10% to 15% of teachers will complete the Basic Course; (ii) at least three to six teachers will complete the Advanced Course; and (iii) at least three to six teachers will complete the Thematic Courses (with at least one teacher completing the course(s) under each category as far as possible). We encourage schools to arrange for their teachers to attend training courses on special education in a systematic manner with reference to the training targets. We will keep in view the training progress of teachers and review the training targets in due course.

34. In consideration of the international trend of supporting students according to their educational needs instead of the types of their SEN, starting from the 2012/13 school year, we have recategorised the elective modules of the Advanced Course and the Thematic Courses under the BAT Courses into (i) Cognition and Learning Needs; (ii) Behavioural, Emotional and Social Development Needs; and (iii) Sensory, Communication and Physical Needs. The thematic course on Behavioural, Emotional and Social Development Needs covers information about the knowledge of and support for students with ASD or emotional and behavioural problems whereas the one on Sensory, Communication and Physical Needs covers information about the knowledge of and support for students with speech and language impairment. Teachers completing these courses should be able to understand the learning and developmental needs of the students so as to provide them with appropriate support.

35. To support schools in arranging for teachers to attend the BAT Courses in a systematic manner, regular teachers of government and aided primary, secondary and special schools are granted paid study leave for attending these courses, and supply teachers are provided or the salaries of supply teachers are reimbursed accordingly. We have been regularly monitoring the training progress of teachers by collecting and processing related data through our computer system. Since the 2009/10 school year, we have made it a practice to provide public sector ordinary schools with written updates on their teacher training positions to facilitate their planning for professional development of teachers.

36. Besides, starting from the 2007/08 school year, the EDB has commissioned annually a tertiary institution to run a 120-hour thematic course on Psychological Approach to Effective Strategies in Handling Students' Challenging Behaviour to enhance teachers' understanding of students' developmental needs and to help teachers develop positive attitudes and effective strategies in helping students handle crises that they may face in different stages of development. The EDB also offers the Certificate Courses on Student Guidance and Discipline for Teachers, which cover topics on understanding and managing students with learning/emotional/behavioural difficulties and preventive measures.

37. We understand that schools may have to revise their work and training priorities in response to the competing needs arising from various education matters in hand. In this

connection, apart from commissioning tertiary institutions to run the above-mentioned structured courses, the EDB also provides teachers with different short-term training activities, including seminars, workshops, exchange sessions on good practices and experience sharing sessions, etc. Schools may also approach the EDB for sending its staff to conduct on-site teacher training, such as thematic talks. In short, depending on their developmental and operational needs, schools may arrange for their teachers to participate in appropriate training activities for enhancing their professional capacity in catering for students with SEN. As professionals, teachers will pursue continuing education having regard to the developmental needs of their schools as well as their own teaching needs.

38. Apart from in-service training, the EDB also places an emphasis on the pre-service training for prospective teachers. On this front, we have maintained communication with teacher education institutions to encourage them to make “supporting students with SEN” a module compulsory for the pre-service education programmes. The institutions have responded positively and included this topic as a compulsory module in their pre-service teacher training programmes from the 2012/13 school year onwards to enhance prospective teachers’ knowledge in this area.

New Senior Secondary (NSS) Curriculum

39. Regarding the design of the NSS curriculum, it is intended to be open and flexible to cater for learner diversity, including students with SEN. Teachers may tailor the curriculum to help students make progress along the learning continuum at a pace that suits them best. We encourage teachers to select appropriate materials and develop different learning activities to meet students’ different learning styles. In addition, teachers may work out the breadth and depth of the NSS curriculum having regard to the learning targets achievable by their students. The NSS core curriculum has the flexibility to cater for student diversity (For examples, please see Annex I).

40. In implementing various support measures for the NSS curriculum, the EDB attaches great importance to catering for student diversity. To that end, the EDB has been organising professional development activities for teachers, such as seminars, sharing sessions and teachers’ learning communities, to enhance their professional capacity in catering for learner diversity (including students with SEN) under the NSS curriculum. For example, through teachers’ sharing about how writing grids/frameworks are used to help students answer questions, fellow teachers grasp the concepts and skills necessary for catering for students who were less competent in language.

41. A medium and long-term review of the Liberal Studies (LS) Curriculum and Assessment is in the pipeline. The Curriculum Development Institute and the HKEAA will

present to the Committee on Liberal Studies under the Curriculum Development Council for its deliberation on issues that are likely to confront students with SEN sitting for the LS examination of the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination and other accompanying support issues.

42. As regards examinations and assessment, students with SEN may apply to the HKEAA for special examination arrangements to ensure that their performance is assessed fairly. To provide more choices for students with different language abilities, the Independent Enquiry Study project of the Liberal Studies could be submitted in either written or non-written form. As for the subject of English Language, a graded approach has been adopted in the design of both Paper 1 (Reading) and Paper 3 (Listening and Integrated Skills). Both papers consist of two parts. While the first part is compulsory for all students, candidates may choose to attempt questions from either the easier or the more difficult section in the second part according to their language abilities.

43. As regards choice of electives inclusive of the Applied Learning (ApL) courses, schools will offer the electives having regard to the needs of their students, resources available, their mission statements as well as school culture. Thus, schools are in the best position to understand the needs of their students and offer elective subjects appropriate for them accordingly. Bakery and Pastry is one of the adapted ApL courses designed for students with intellectual disabilities in special or ordinary schools. In the 2012-14 cohort, about 60% of applicants for the course are offered a place. Since each student may apply for a maximum of two adapted ApL courses and accept a maximum of two offers after a selection process, those who are not offered a place in Bakery and Pastry may still enrol in other adapted ApL courses under the same category such as Elementary Bakery or Basic Catering Practice. In general, applications for adapted ApL courses are subject to a selection process.

Special Examination Arrangements

44. The EDB has produced and uploaded onto its website the Operation Guide on the WSA to IE (2010) and Special Arrangements for Internal Examinations for Students with SEN (2009), which set out the general principles and strategies on instructional accommodation and special examination arrangements for teachers' reference. Teachers are invited to attend annual territory-wide seminars on instructional accommodation and special examination arrangements organised by the EDB. EPs also organise school-based teacher development workshops for individual schools as appropriate to help teachers gain a deeper understanding of such arrangements. On their visits to schools, EPs and inspectors of the Special Education Sections will remind schools to observe the above guidelines and make special examination arrangements for students in need.

45. Under the School Development and Accountability Framework, the EDB requests that schools should uphold the principle of openness and transparency in order to help parents get a grasp of the school-based support measures and strategies (including special arrangements in internal examinations) for students with SEN.

46. In order to ensure fairness and equity for all candidates, whether with SEN or not, in public examinations, candidates with SEN (including those with SpLD) are required to furnish the HKEAA with sufficient supporting documents for examination and approval if they apply for special examination arrangements in public examinations in the territory. Similar application procedures for special arrangements in public examinations are also in place in other countries such as the United Kingdom, the United States and Australia.

47. The Task Group on Special Examination Arrangements for Candidates with Specific Learning Disabilities under the HKEAA has set up a working group to study the feasibility of allowing candidates with severe SpLD to use amanuenses or speech-to-text conversion software. Members of the working group consist of representatives of the HKEAA, secondary schools and tertiary institutions, parents, clinical psychologists from the DH and EPs from the EDB. The working group started to work and held its first meeting in March 2013. On the other hand, the HKEAA is of the view that accepting dictating answers may undermine the fairness and credibility of the assessment, and may make an effective evaluation of candidates' abilities impossible.

48. 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 HKSpLD Research Team for the assessment of students with SpLD in primary and secondary schools respectively. Since these are two different sets of assessment tools measuring slightly different literacy and cognitive abilities, there may be 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 were merely classified as marginal SpLD, not SpLD, cases in primary schools but again fail to meet the diagnostic criteria when they are reviewed in secondary schools. To address these cases, the psychologists will make professional judgment on the students' learning needs and special examination arrangements with the aid of 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), learning performance and progress of the students, difficulties they encountered in the course of learning and the effectiveness of support measures provided for them, etc. Students who are able to provide supporting documents for their significant difficulties in reading and writing can apply to the HKEAA for special examination arrangements. Both the application and

supporting documents will be submitted to the Task Group on Special Examination Arrangements for Candidates with Specific Learning Disabilities for consideration on a case by case basis.

49. Public examinations are implemented according to the stipulations of Curriculum and Assessment Guides of various subjects. For the principle of fairness, all candidates, including those with special needs, should be assessed according to the same standards. Guided by this principle as well as the curriculum and assessment requirements, the HKEAA will make adaptations and accommodation in examinations having regard to the special needs of the candidates. To ensure that the scripts of these candidates are fairly marked, a group of experienced markers for each subject is specially assigned to mark their scripts. These markers pay extra attention to ensure that the scripts are assessed fairly taking into consideration the special needs of the candidates.

Higher Education or Training Opportunities

50. The Government is committed to providing our young people in Hong Kong (including students with SEN) with flexible and multiple study pathways which comprise undergraduate and sub-degree programmes, Yi Jin Diploma programme, vocational education and other programmes covering different professional and academic disciplines. The Vocational Training Council (VTC) established a new Youth College in the 2012/13 school year to provide dedicated support for ethnic minority students and students with SEN to enable them to have appropriate professional education and training opportunities. In the 2013-14 Budget, the Financial Secretary has also proposed allocating \$12 million to the VTC each year for purchasing equipment and learning aids for students with SEN, providing them with psychological and student counselling services, and enhancing support for teaching and learning.

51. Post-secondary institutions in Hong Kong offer equal opportunities to all eligible applicants (including students with ASD) for admission. The admission decisions are based on holistic assessment of the merits of the applicants. To assist students with SEN to study in University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded institutions, a sub-system under the Joint University Programmes Admissions System has been created for the admission of these students. Under the system, students with SEN do not have to compete with other applicants but they must meet the minimum entrance requirements of the corresponding programmes. Apart from academic results, applicants' performance in other aspects will also be taken into account. Furthermore, it is considered not appropriate to impose a blanket treatment for all applicants with SEN since the conditions of persons with different types of disabilities vary and their needs for exemptions also differ. The VTC also has a special admission procedure

for students with SEN. Applicants with SEN who meet the entrance requirements and are assessed to be able to complete the programme during the interview will be offered a place.

52. Overall speaking, many post-secondary education institutions provide special arrangements and support services to students with SEN with regard to their needs, including assigning academic advisors, providing tutorial services, offering special examination and assessment arrangements, making flexible programme application arrangements, providing special learning support measures (e.g. extra tutorials and early dissemination of handouts), providing appropriate boarding in campus as well as learning and amenity facilities, procuring and providing appropriate equipment (e.g. automatic page turner), offering scholarships and loans as well as career advisory and support services, etc.

53. The Financial Secretary has proposed making two separate injections of \$20 million each, totalling \$40 million, into the Government Scholarship Fund (GSF) and the Self-financing Post-secondary Education Fund in the 2013-14 Budget. Investment returns generated from injections in the two endowment funds will be used to provide new scholarships to deserving post-secondary students with SEN in recognition of their efforts in the pursuit of excellence in academic and other areas. It is expected that about 100 students with SEN pursuing full-time locally-accredited post-secondary programmes will be awarded scholarships every year.

54. At present, there are scholarship schemes set up by the private sector that provide scholarships specifically for students with SEN for pursuing undergraduate or postgraduate programmes overseas. Students with SEN who aspire to further their studies abroad may apply for these scholarships. The Government has no plan to set up a dedicated scholarship scheme or loan scheme for students with SEN to pursue post-secondary programmes outside Hong Kong.

Home-school Cooperation and Public Education

55. The EDB recognises the importance of home-school cooperation. It has been urging schools to establish a regular communication mechanism with parents, the details of which have been set out in the Operation Guide on the WSA to IE, including engaging parents in planning of intervention programmes and evaluating the progress of their children and the effectiveness of the support so as to tie in with the work of the schools. The EDB has also required schools to report their IE policies, additional resources allocated and support measures provided for students in their Annual School Reports, and upload such information onto their school websites for parents' reference. To enhance parents' understanding of their roles and ways to cater for their children with SEN, the EDB has uploaded a guide on IE for parents, namely, the Parent Guide on the WSA to IE, onto its website. Topics covered in the

Parent Guide include the procedures for identifying and assessing students with SEN, ways for enhancing cooperation between parents and specialists and strengthening home-school cooperation.

56. Effective implementation of IE and elimination of discrimination against people with disabilities require the support and collaboration of various sectors in the community. The EDB attaches great importance to publicity and information dissemination for enhancing public awareness of the IE concept and measures. We will continue to collaborate with the school sector, government agencies and NGOs to keep stakeholders informed of the latest development in IE through different media and various forms of publicity activities, such as talks, workshops, exhibitions, film/television etc. Details of related activities held in recent years are shown in Annex II. Furthermore, the Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB) has substantially increased the annual allocation for relevant public education activities from \$2.5 million to about \$13 million since 2009-10 so as to enhance public awareness of the rights and needs of persons with disabilities. Territory-wide public education activities launched in recent years include TV programmes, docu-drama series, publicity programmes for youths and students, and roving exhibitions, etc. In the meantime, apart from subsidising 18 District Councils to organise relevant public education activities in their respective communities, the LWB has provided funding support for NGOs, public bodies, local associations and self-help groups of persons with disabilities for organising publicity events at district level with a view to disseminating the message of a barrier-free and inclusive community.

Support Services for Parents

57. Regarding the welfare service for students with SEN, the SWD has been concerned about the needs of young people at various stages of their development. In this connection, the SWD funds the operation of 138 Integrated Children and Youth Services Centres (ICYSCs) across the territory, providing young people with socialisation programmes and multifarious support services at neighbourhood level. Furthermore, timely and appropriate support services are also made available to young people through cross-department and cross-sector collaboration. ICYSCs also prioritise their work plans and service delivery according to respective district needs, for example by forming support groups for students with SEN and their parents.

58. Besides, 34 NGOs subvented by the SWD are operating school social work service for 471 secondary schools to provide counselling and support services for students with academic, social or emotional problems. During service delivery, school social workers communicate and work closely with school personnel and other welfare service units/stakeholders in the community, and make appropriate referrals to meet students' needs

of the service. Families with students with SEN may also approach the Integrated Family Service Centres (IFSCs) or Integrated Services Centres (ISCs) for assistance should the need arise. Currently, there are 65 IFSCs and two ISCs, operated either by the SWD or NGOs, across the territory. Social workers of these centres will thoroughly assess the needs and difficulties of the families concerned. On a need basis, the families will be provided with a continuum of preventive, supportive and remedial welfare services, including counselling, family life education, parent-child activities, support/mutual help groups and referral services to enhance their skills in stress management, as well as child care and discipline.

59. The EDB has progressively strengthened the resources of student guidance service since its implementation and currently, all primary schools have been provided with student guidance officer/teacher/personnel to support students and their parents through individual or group counselling services. 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 schools in 2005 to provide schools with materials for organising targeted training courses for parents. The Parent Training Manual has been uploaded onto the website of Hong Kong Education City (HKEdCity). In 2013, the EDB also publishes the Read and Write Made Easy: A Resource Pack for Supporting Upper Primary Students in Reading and Writing (Parents' Version) to facilitate the organisation of training courses for parents by schools. Moreover, the EDB holds regular regional or school-based seminars and workshops for parents of children with SpLD every year to assist parents in acquiring the necessary skills to support their children.

Cross-sector Collaboration

60. Regarding support for students with SEN and their parents, Government departments all along have a clear division of responsibilities in their expert areas and would work together to ensure orderly service delivery within their respective professional ambit.

61. The HA and DH are responsible for assessment and treatment for children with developmental disorders, as well as referring them for appropriate rehabilitation services. The SWD provides pre-school rehabilitation services for children with disabilities from birth to six years old, and renders support to families in need. The EDB provides early identification and appropriate learning support services for school age children with SEN to enhance their learning effectiveness. The HKEAA makes available special examination arrangements for students with SEN so that they can show the subject knowledge and skills acquired in a fair manner. Since the special education support services cut across different age groups and stakeholders, service needs can be most effectively met if individual services are provided by the relevant professional departments.

62. To enhance the learning effectiveness of students with SEN, the EDB has set up working groups and coordination mechanisms on various issues jointly with various Government departments and sectors. We have maintained active communication and collaboration with various stakeholders and sought their views proactively to continuously better the IE services. In recent years, the EDB has been promoting cross-department and cross-sector support services, which cover early identification and early intervention, for children with SEN. If necessary, the EDB will continue to coordinate various efforts within the existing organisations and frameworks through appropriate means and channels.

63. The EDB understands that effective implementation of IE calls for participation of different stakeholders. To this end, the EDB set up the Task Force on IE in Mainstream Schools in 2005, which comprises major stakeholders involved in the promotion of IE, namely representatives from various Schools Councils, special schools cum resource centres, networks nominated by the Hong Kong Council of Social Service, Committee on Home-school Cooperation, parent groups (including the Hong Kong Association for SpLD and the Hong Kong Association for AD/HD), tertiary institutions, DH and SWD, etc. Through regular meetings with the Task Force, the EDB has kept stakeholders updated on the latest progress of implementing IE and sought their views on improvement measures.

64. The EDB believes that the existing inter-department and cross-sector collaboration mechanisms have been effective. As such, there is no need to set up another inter-department and cross-sector working group.

Regulation through Legislation

65. As mentioned in paragraph 18 above, subsequent to the implementation of the DDO and the Code of Practice on Education, the existing legal framework in Hong Kong can basically serve as an effective safeguard for the rights of students with SEN. We note the proposal for legislation be introduced to protect students with SEN, but consider that it is more appropriate, at this stage, to explore how support measures for implementing IE can be strengthened so that more suitable arrangements can be provided for students. From an educational perspective, it will be more effective for schools to adopt a WSA to implement IE to improve their culture, policy and measures, which in turn enhances the effectiveness of support for students with SEN. Besides, we will continue to promote IE through various activities to raise public awareness of persons with disabilities and cultivate the attitude of acceptance of individual differences.

Views Sought

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

Education Bureau

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Examples of how the flexibly designed New Senior Secondary Core Subjects Curriculum caters for learner diversity

- The Elective Part of the Senior Secondary English Language curriculum aims to broaden students' learning experience and cater for learner diversity. Students may choose three out of the eight suggested elective modules according to their preferences and abilities. Moreover, teachers may use their expertise to design a wide range of suitably challenging learning activities according to their students' language abilities. When drawing up time allocation plans for different curriculum components, teachers may allocate learning times flexibly between the Compulsory and Elective Parts as well as among elective modules for the purpose of enabling their students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.
- For Chinese Language, schools may take into account their students' learning performance in the Core Part and their diverse developmental needs, and offer the most suitable modules that enable them to demonstrate their different abilities to the full. Schools may make use of the flexibility to offer two to four elective modules and make full use of the curriculum space thus created to cater for student diversity by, for example, designing modules with extended learning activities, and arranging different modes of classroom instruction. The curriculum also allows flexible use of learning materials, with over 300 pieces of recommended reference materials. Based on students' interests and abilities, teachers may choose their reference materials which match the learning targets (including writing) in the Core Part or elective modules so as to cater for student diversity.

Publicity and information dissemination activities organised by the EDB in recent years

- In the 2008/09 school year, “An Inclusive School – It All Begins with Our Hearts” IE publicity drive (including video production and broadcasting contests) was jointly organised by the EDB, DH and the Subsidised Primary Schools Councils to enable teachers, students and parents to better understand and accept students with SEN.
- To enable the public to gain a better understanding of students with SEN, the EDB, DH and Radio Television Hong Kong jointly produced a series of 10 episodes of TV programme “Parenting”, telling the real-life experiences of parents in taking care of their children with SEN.
- Compact discs containing the contents of these promotional activities and proposals for extended activities were produced and distributed to schools in December 2009 and January 2010 respectively with a view to cultivating an inclusive culture in schools through moral and national education and cross-curricular programmes. The contents of these compact discs have been uploaded onto the HKEdCity website for public access.
- In June 2011 and November 2012, the EDB participated in the Learning and Teaching Expo organised by the HKEdCity. Through booth displays, talks and school visits, the EDB introduced to teachers and the sector the support strategies adopted by ordinary schools in implementing IE, the characteristics of learning and teaching in special schools as well as services, teaching materials and ancillary equipment, etc. for supporting students with SEN. In mid-2012, the EDB organised the Visual Arts Contest on Inclusion, together with a series of related activities, including exhibitions of the winning entries to promote an inclusive school culture.
- The EDB has published the Operation Guide on the WSA to IE and the Parent Guide on the WSA to IE for schools and parents respectively, in which IE principles and some successful cases are introduced. Both guides have been uploaded onto the EDB’s website for public access.
- We publish an online newsletter named “融情” regularly to provide parents and the public with updated special education information and promote IE experiences.