

For information

**Panel on Education
Subcommittee on Integrated Education**

**Response to Views and Concerns Raised
at the Meetings on 18 June and 8 July 2013**

Purpose

At the Subcommittee's request, we set out in this paper 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 18 June and 8 July 2013.

Response to Views and Concerns

Identification and Assessment Mechanisms

2. The Government has put in place multiple mechanisms in order to ensure early identification and assessment for children suspected to have developmental disorders so that suitable treatment can be provided in a timely manner. The 31 Maternal and Child Health Centres (MCHCs) under the Department of Health (DH) provide a comprehensive range of health promotion and disease prevention services for children aged from birth to five years. With the health and developmental surveillance programme, MCHCs have established an effective system for early identification of children suspected to have developmental problems.

3. According to the service schedule, a new case intake appointment is usually arranged for all newborns newly registered within a day or two to identify any health concerns during the early neonatal period. Healthcare professionals of the MCHC conduct a series of routine reviews scheduled at children's different crucial ages (usually when they are due for vaccination) to interview parents and observe children's development in various areas, including gross and fine motor, language and communication, social and play skills, self-care, vision and hearing. Anticipatory guidance on child development and parenting is provided through information booklets and other means. Other than the above specified time, if parents have any query or worry, they can initiate an appointment with the MCHC for special follow up arrangement at any time.

4. Pre-primary institutions serve as another important platform for the identification of children with special educational needs (SEN). The referral and reply system developed by the 'Comprehensive Child Development Service' has facilitated early identification of children suspected of developmental disorders. Teachers of pre-primary institutions can refer needy children direct to MCHCs in the respective district for preliminary assessment and, if necessary, MCHCs will make referral to the Child Assessment Service (CAS) of DH or appropriate specialists for further follow-up. In general, preliminary assessments for those children suspected to have developmental disorders by the doctors of the MCHC can be arranged within a month or two upon receiving the referral. Children aged four can also participate in pre-school vision screening programme provided by MCHCs. The waiting time for such screening normally takes only two to ten weeks.

5. Moreover, the CAS of DH provides comprehensive assessment services, diagnosis, set rehabilitation plans, provides interim counseling for child and family, public health education activities, as well as review evaluation to children under 12 years of age suspected to have developmental problem symptoms. After making diagnosis, the CAS will arrange and coordinate treatment and rehabilitation services for these children as appropriate according to their individual needs. In the past three years, preliminary interviews for all new cases were conducted within three weeks while professional assessments for over 90% of new cases were completed within six months.

6. As regards hearing impairment (HI), the Universal Newborn Hearing Screening has been implemented for all newborns in the eight hospitals with obstetrics services under the Hospital Authority (HA) since 2007. In 2011, over 42 800 newborns were provided with hearing screening. Newborns who do not pass the screening will be referred to the Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) clinics for further assessment and follow-up. MCHCs under DH provide newborn hearing screening (Oto-Acoustic Emission test) for those babies who have not received similar screening at their birthing hospitals. Based on past statistics, the median age of babies receiving their first hearing screening is around one month old.

7. The Student Health Service (SHS) of DH provides preliminary hearing screening for primary one (P1) and secondary two (S2) students or those suspected to have hearing problems. Students who do not pass the hearing screening will be further assessed by the SHS to confirm the nature and severity of their hearing impairment, triaged and referred to various service agencies (such as ENT clinics of HA and the Speech and Hearing Service Section of the Education Bureau (EDB)) according to their needs for follow-up and intervention provided by relevant professionals.

Support Services

8. The Social Welfare Department (SWD) is mindful of the timely provision of pre-school training for children with disabilities including those with HI, physical disabilities (PD) and visual impairment (VI). SWD has all along been monitoring the waiting time for pre-school rehabilitation services and making full use of resources available to facilitate early provision of services for children in need. Over the past six years, the Government has allocated funding to provide about 1 500 additional places, with 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 be in service in 2013-14. Furthermore, SWD has reserved sites for providing 1 200 additional places in the coming five years (i.e. from 2013-14 to 2017-18). SWD will continue to identify other sites for additional provision of places to meet the demand.

9. In addition, the Community Care Fund has launched an assistance programme since December 2011 to provide 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 organizations (NGOs) while waiting for subvented pre-school rehabilitation services and facilitating their learning and development. In view of the effectiveness of the programme and service demand, SWD is considering to incorporate the programme into its regular subvented services.

Provision of Amplification Devices for Students with HI

10. For children diagnosed by medical practitioners or audiologists as having persistent HI, the HA and the EDB provide them with support according to their respective expertise (i.e. healthcare and educational services). Regarding the provision of amplification devices, the HA performs cochlear implant surgeries for clinically eligible children with profound HI. Cochlear implant, which is an invasive medical device composed of an internal implant and an external speech processor, requires surgical procedures for implantation. When a repair or replacement of the external speech processor is required, audiologists would use specific equipment for fitting and programming, while taking into account the condition of the internal implant and advice from medical practitioners in the procedures. Hence, the provision of cochlear implant has all along been provided by the HA, while the EDB provides hearing aids to those children with HI in need.

External Speech Processors of Cochlear Implants

11. The Government is committed to provide healthcare services to more patients with limited public resources based on the principles of fair and effective use of public resources. The HA has been performing cochlear implant surgeries for clinically eligible patients with HI at a standard charge since 1991. Under normal circumstances, the implant can last for a lifetime. As for the external speech processor, the current supplier provides a three-year warranty. Upon the expiry of the warranty period, patients are responsible for its repair and maintenance. Same as other medical items of similar nature (for example, prostheses), the replacement of external speech processors of cochlear implants is not covered by the services of standard charges of the HA. If patients in need of a replacement of external speech processors of cochlear implants can afford the cost, they are required to pay for it. Since April 2013, the “replacement of external speech processor and related accessories” has been covered under the Samaritan Fund (SF).

12. The financial assessment mechanism for processing applications for subsidy under the SF for the “replacement of external speech processor and related accessories” is the same as that for other non-drug “privately purchased medical items”. In vetting patients’ eligibility for SF subsidy, the SF would consider both the clinical and financial conditions of patients. For cases with overriding social grounds, the SF would exercise discretion in their consideration. Eligible applicants may be given full or partial subsidy, depending on their financial situation to pay for related expenses. The objective of the SF is to provide financial assistance to needy patients. In order to provide more comprehensive support for needy patients, the HA will regularly keep reviewing the coverage and the eligibility criteria of the SF through the established mechanism.

Hearing Aids

13. To ensure that the performance of hearing aids meet the needs of students with HI, the EDB is committed to reviewing from time to time the types, specifications and functions of hearing aids according to the needs of students, advance in technology, literature research and views of advisers and stakeholders, etc. A chief audiologist from the Department of Otorhinolaryngology, Head and Neck Surgery of the Chinese University of Hong Kong has been invited as an adviser to offer professional advice on the hearing aids provided by the EDB. The adviser confirmed that the functions of the hearing aids provided by the EDB were appropriate to and could meet the needs of students with HI.

14. The EDB has been adopting open tendering procedures to select appropriate service providers for hearing aids provision in accordance with the Government’s guidelines on

procurement. EDB's requirements of hearing aids such as types, specifications, fitting procedures and performance evaluation, etc. are provided in details in the tender document, whereas the requirements on related services include the provision of audiological review, counseling, repair, professional indemnity and qualification of responsible audiologists. In the selection of tenderers, the EDB will ensure that the submission is in full compliance with the requirements before considering the price.

15. The EDB had investigated the proposal of introducing more than one service provider for the provision of hearing aids and providing choices for parents to select on their own. However, this proposal does not meet the Government's procurement requirements.

16. Regarding the modes of provision of hearing aids and related services, including the issue of cash coupon to parents, the EDB considers the current measure (i.e. procurement through bulk purchase by the Government for providing suitable hearing aids for students with HI in need) is in the best interest of students. The practice eliminates parents' inconvenience in choosing hearing aids everywhere, while enables the EDB to monitor the quality of hearing aids and related services more effectively. Moreover, parents generally do not have much professional knowledge to determine which hearing aids could best suit the needs of their children. They may have the risk of purchasing expensive hearing aids with unnecessary functions under the influence of other parents and service providers.

17. Regarding the support to students with HI at tertiary level, please see paragraphs 53 to 55 below.

Implementation of IE at the School Level

General Acceptance and Support Level

18. The EDB has all along attached great importance to supporting HI students. Under the Whole School Approach (WSA), we encourage schools to adopt the 3-Tier Intervention Model to provide appropriate support to cater for the individual needs of students with SEN (including students with HI). Tier-1 support refers to the use of basic resources and quality teaching in regular classrooms to help students with mild or transient learning difficulties before their problems deteriorated. Tier-2 support refers to "add on" intervention, such as small group learning and pull-out programmes etc., for students with persistent learning difficulties, including those with SEN. Tier-3 support refers to intensive individualized support for students with severe learning difficulties and SEN. Audiologists, speech

therapists and educational psychologists from the EDB provide students with HI with professional support in various areas, including listening environment, listening strategies, use of amplification devices, speech and language skills, social adjustment and learning, etc. They also inform teachers and parents about related resources and recommend appropriate support strategies to them. In addition, the Enhanced Support Service for Students with HI Attending Ordinary Schools (ESS) would be offered to students with HI in need of additional support in learning and communication.

19. Clustering students with a specific SEN in a handful of ordinary schools may turn them into alternative special schools. This arrangement deprives students with SEN a school environment with sufficient peer interactions and hence is detrimental to their learning. Currently, the Government is adopting a “dual-track” approach in special education. Most of the students with SEN in ordinary schools are found to be capable of coping with the mainstream curriculum and learning together with other students in the class. According to the current school places allocation system, all public sector ordinary schools across the territory will admit students with SEN and a WSA is adopted to provide these students with appropriate support. If schools admit students with SEN as a normal practice, this will enable them to gain experiences from the care given to such students to further develop their strength and prepare them to become a resource school catering for students with a particular SEN.

Use of Sign Language for Students with HI

20. All along, the EDB has been encouraging teachers to adopt the most appropriate mode to teach and to communicate with students with HI having regard to the student’s ability and needs. Children with more severe HI may choose to attend special schools for children with HI, where hearing teachers as well as deaf teachers and teaching assistants use both oral and sign languages, with the support of visual strategies (including written text, pictures, real objects, body language, etc.) to facilitate students’ comprehension and learning effectiveness. For students with HI attending ordinary schools, with the use of amplification devices, the hearing abilities of the students are enhanced, enabling them to communicate with people orally. Teachers will use oral language, visual strategies, contextual cues, body language, written text and gestures in daily teaching or communication with HI students to facilitate students’ comprehension and learning effectiveness.

21. The EDB has been providing additional resources to address the learning and communication needs of students with HI, including the ESS. Under the ESS commissioned

by the EDB, experienced resource teachers from schools for children with HI will provide after-school support to HI students to help them equip learning strategies, enhance their literacy skills and improve speech, language and communication skills in order to enhance the effectiveness of students' learning and communication. Resource teachers (RTs) would use sign language to assist teaching, if deemed necessary. They would also share with the home school teachers on how to use sign language to assist teaching. Regarding training for teachers on the use of sign language in teaching, please refer to paragraphs 42, 44 and 45 below.

22. In regard to subvented pre-school rehabilitation services, NGO operators can choose their teaching or training modes in the provision of services. Generally speaking, the training for pre-school children with HI usually focuses more on intensive auditory and speech training with a view to developing their residual hearing ability to the full at the early developmental stage. Individual organization also provides sign language training on a case-by-case basis.

Barrier-free Access and Facilities for Students with VI and PD

23. Regarding school building facilities, schools constructed after 1997 are in compliance with the prevailing requirements promulgated by the Building Department on barrier free access to facilitate access to school buildings and facilities by persons with disabilities. In the 2012/13 school year, out of the 852 ordinary schools in Hong Kong, 227 of them completed after 1997 complied with the above standards. As for schools built before 1997, subject to technical feasibility, the EDB has installed barrier free facilities such as lifts, accessible toilets, ramps, etc. for persons in need to use through the second and later phases of the School Improvement Programme.

24. When major alteration or improvement works are carried out in schools, the EDB will install in their premises the barrier free facilities in need as far as possible and in accordance with the latest requirements on barrier free access and other established criteria, and consider factors such as technical feasibility, urgency for such facilities, availability of alternative measures to solve the inaccessibility problem, and availability of funding.

25. Furthermore, under the EDB's established mechanism for upgrading school infrastructure, schools may carry out repair and improvement works on their school facilities according to their needs in the context of the annual major repairs / alteration programme, including the provision of barrier free facilities such as lifts, accessible toilets, ramps, etc.

To facilitate the learning of students with SEN and their participation in school activities, schools can also apply for the Top-up Fund from the EDB to procure special furniture and equipment or carry out minor conversion work such as construction of ramp, conversion of toilet or tailor-made desks and chairs for students with physical disability.

26. In sum, the design and structures of the some 800 public sector ordinary schools built at different times in the past posed some constraints for full implementation of the prevailing standards regarding barrier free access, and the EDB does not keep statistics on the barrier free facilities of individual schools. However, the EDB would, through the above channels, continue to add or improve the facilities to facilitate access to buildings and facilities by persons with disabilities as far as possible.

Equal Learning Opportunities in Schools

27. The EDB has produced the Operation Guide on the WSA to IE, in which a detailed account of the adoption of the WSA by schools to cater for students with SEN is given, including formulating an inclusive policy, cultivating an inclusive culture and implementing inclusive practices, etc. The Guide also covers curriculum accommodation and adaptations to assessment methods for schools to develop an inclusive culture and eliminate discrimination. We have also compiled a booklet entitled Catering for Student Differences ~ Indicators for Inclusion to facilitate the continuous improvement in inclusive policies, culture and practices in schools and to serve as a means to gauge the learning outcomes and the level of participation. We have also reminded schools through different channels and on various occasions to provide appropriate support and reasonable accommodation measures for students with SEN (including students with PD and VI) so that they can engage in various learning activities and enrich their learning experiences. Moreover, RTs under the Resource Support Programme for Students with VI (RSP) will give professional advice on student activities to schools in order that appropriate arrangements on subject choices and learning programmes can be made for students with VI. If needed, RTs may even draw up supporting measures for schools to facilitate the participation of students with VI in learning activities. If schools have doubts about how to support students with PD, schools may also seek EDB's professional advice on the provision of appropriate support service or procurement of equipment needed.

Allocation of Resources

28. The EDB has all along encouraged schools to adopt a WSA in implementing IE and

form student support teams to coordinate various support measures to cater for learner diversity. Professional staff from the EDB also conducts regular school visits, through which they provide schools with consultation services and organize training and sharing sessions to assist them in deploying resources effectively for the support of students with SEN. The EDB has also specifically required schools to be open and transparent in their operation and to establish a regular communication mechanism to help parents learn about school-based support policies and measures for students with SEN, as well as enhancing their involvement in supporting their children's learning. The EDB has also made it clear to schools that they should make available information about their IE policies, resources and support measures to the public through various channels, such as school development plans, annual reports and school websites, to keep the public informed of the implementation of IE in their schools. In addition, the EDB requires schools to submit a self-evaluation report on the implementation of the WSA to IE at the end of each school year.

29. As stated in our previous papers submitted to the Subcommittee, to help schools cater for students with SEN, the EDB has been providing public sector secondary and primary schools with additional resources on top of the regular subvention for all ordinary schools. Among them, the Top-up Fund is made available without any application deadlines, and applications for the Fund from schools are accepted and processed by the EDB year-round. Schools may submit an application to the EDB with regard to the needs of their students with SEN. The vetting process will normally be completed within three weeks, provided that all required documents are duly submitted.

30. In the 2008/09 school year, the EDB created a deputy headship post in primary schools, the duties of which are, among others, to spearhead and coordinate efforts to support students with SEN. In fact, the EDB has advised secondary and primary schools to assign, as far as possible, their vice-principals to lead and coordinate the task for effective engagement of the teaching force in implementing IE. Schools may also deploy 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. At the same time, schools may use additional resources and relevant grants provided by the EDB for students with SEN to recruit additional teachers or teaching assistants who will assist in implementing various measures. These current practices allow schools to utilize resources effectively and flexibly to provide support to students in accordance with their special needs.

31. Small-class teaching is being implemented in public sector primary schools by phases and will cover all levels from P1 to P6 by the 2014/15 school year. Small-class

teaching gives teachers more room to cater for students' diverse learning needs, including SEN. We consider that to effectively implement IE, schools should translate the WSA into action, cultivate an inclusive school culture, introduce support measures in a continuous fashion while enhancing teachers' knowledge of special education and their ability to cater for learner diversity.

32. Under the 3-Tier Intervention Model, the EDB requests schools to draw up individual education plans for students in need of Tier-3 individualized support and follow up on them regularly. Generally speaking, students with SEN in ordinary schools are able to cope with the mainstream curriculum and learn together with other students. The EDB encourages schools to provide support for these students with SEN under the WSA to IE. Schools are also required to record the support and adaptations offered to them as well as their performance and progress for regular review and adjustment of the tier of support and intervention strategies required. In other words, schools have already been providing appropriate support programmes and follow-up for all students with SEN under the prevailing mechanism. With regard to calls for schools to formulate a comprehensive individual education plan for each student with SEN, we have to be mindful of the need to strike a balance between teachers' workload and whether the proposed measure can effectively increase the effectiveness of support services or not.

33. The EDB keeps in touch and, where necessary, meets with school councils, NGOs and parent groups to strengthen communication and keep them abreast of the latest developments of IE and prevailing support measures. The Operation Guide on the WSA to IE published by the EDB also details the resources, services and NGOs relevant to various types of SEN for schools to choose the services best suit their own needs.

Professional Support

Enhanced Support Service for Students with HI Attending Ordinary School (ESS)

34. As mentioned in paragraph 21 above, ESS is an additional professional service provided by the EDB to HI students whose learning and communication problems persist after school-based support. While receiving ESS, the students would also receive an array of school-based support services in their respective home schools, including various teaching and learning support under the 3-Tier Intervention Model and school-based speech therapy services.

35. From the 2012/13 school year onwards, the EDB has allocated additional resources including the provision of additional resource teachers, creation of a speech therapist post and an increase in cash grant rate to special school for children with HI to facilitate the school for children with HI to adopt an enhanced mode of support in providing ESS to the students in need of the service. The EDB would review the service quality and the allocation of relevant resources of ESS to ensure that the service provided meets the needs of students with HI.

Resource Support Programme for Students with VI (RSP)

36. RTs of the RSP pay regular visits to schools to follow up on the learning progress of students with VI and advise on the necessary teaching strategies and special examination arrangements for the students. Teachers from ordinary schools, for those teaching students with VI in particular, may contact special school for children with VI to arrange for a visit, and through such professional exchanges, they can have a grasp of both the learning and teaching in these schools. However, owing to the small scale and hence the limited number of teaching staff of the special school for children with VI, regular attachment of teachers from ordinary schools is not advised as this may overload the school and produce a negative impact on the study of the students.

Centralised Braille Production Centre

37. Since 1986, the EDB has been providing subvention for the Centralised Braille Production Centre (CBPC) to produce Braille transcription of textbooks, reference books, question papers for public examinations, etc. for students of special schools for children with VI, integrators with VI in ordinary schools and other persons in need of the service. The CBPC has to meet certain performance targets, which include, under normal circumstances, producing Braille version of teaching materials for VI students for that school term (at least the first volume / the first chapter) or Braille version of relevant e-books according to the date specified by the schools or not later than one month. The CBPC is required to meet the performance targets in 95% of the cases.

38. To ensure that effective and efficient Braille transcription service is provided by the CBPC for persons with VI, especially the production of Braille textbooks for students with VI in need of the service, the EDB attends the steering committee meetings of the CBPC to monitor its operation and requests the CBPC to submit a progress report on Braille production on a regular basis. The steering committee of the CBPC also conducts surveys to gauge the views of teachers and students / parents on the effectiveness and efficiency of Braille textbook

production and submit the survey reports to the EDB.

39. The EDB held a number of meetings with the CBPC, the Ebenezer School and publishers' associations in 2011 and 2012 to explore ways to expedite the process of Braille textbook production. Since then, new arrangements have been in smooth operation for two school years. A vast majority of students with VI are able to obtain the textbooks timely at the beginning of the school term. Over 95% of the performance targets are met. It is only in cases where some printed books are out of stock, or there is a sudden change of the teaching schedule or the use of books by the schools that individual students are unable to receive the Braille textbooks on time. As regards the production of Braille textbooks and reference books, it should be noted that the current arrangements are made in compliance with the Copyright Ordinance. The EDB also noticed that the World Intellectual Property Organization has passed the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled on 28 June 2013. Although the Marrakesh Treaty has yet to come into force, the EDB will pay close attention to its development and will advise the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau on relevant issues where necessary.

40. To meet the growing demand, the EDB has increased the annual subvention to the CBPC from about \$9.7 million in the 2011-12 financial year to \$11 million in the 2012-13 financial year. The EDB understands that using information technology to facilitate learning and teaching has been a global trend and that digital learning resources would be used more extensively and e-learning would be enhanced accordingly. The EDB is now promoting the E-Textbook Market Development Scheme to facilitate and encourage the participation of developers to develop e-textbooks based on our local curricula. Participating developers are required to incorporate elements catering for students with SEN into the e-textbooks to be developed, including a design suitable for use by students with VI.

Professional Development and Training for Teachers

Teacher Training for HI and VI Students

41. The EDB has been encouraging teacher training institutions to make "catering for students with SEN" a compulsory module in the pre-service training programmes. Individual institutions have included this topic as a module in their teacher training programmes to broaden prospective teachers' knowledge and skills in catering for students with SEN (including students with VI and PD).

42. Starting from the 2012/13 school year, the EDB has re-categorized the elective modules of the Thematic Courses for serving teachers into (i) Cognition and Learning Needs; (ii) Behavioural, Emotional and Social Development Needs; and (iii) Sensory, Communication and Physical Needs. The Thematic Courses on Sensory, Communication and Physical Needs cover knowledge and skills of caring for students with VI. As for the Advanced Courses, attachment is one of the course components. Arrangements will be made for participating teachers to visit different types of special schools (including those for students with VI) or relevant organizations and to gain experience in teaching students with SEN. We have been urging schools to arrange for their teachers (including those teaching mathematics and science subjects) to attend suitable courses in a systematic manner with regard to the schools' actual needs. Teachers completing the training are expected to share their learning experience with their colleagues in school. In addition, the thematic training course on "education for students with severe or multiple disabilities" offered by the EDB for special school teachers in the 2012/13 school year also covers a topic on the use of sign language to assist teaching.

43. The EDB is fully aware that the public attach great importance to the need to raise teachers' professional capacity in catering for students with SEN. We have hence set a series of training targets for schools to achieve by the end of the 2014/15 school year. Schools are strongly requested to draw up a school-based teacher professional development plan on catering for students with SEN according to the training targets set out in the EDB circulars and make appropriate arrangements for their teachers to receive training in order to continuously enhance teachers' professional abilities to cater for needs of students with SEN. In this connection, the EDB informs public sector ordinary schools of their teacher training position on an annual basis to facilitate their school-based planning and review. We will keep in view the progress in target attainment of the schools and review the training targets in due course.

44. Supported by the Quality Education Fund, the Lutheran School for the Deaf is implementing a number of sign-language related initiatives, including sign language classes for teaching staff and parents. For the EDB, we have been providing advice to the school on the initiatives with a view to enhancing its teachers' ability to use sign language to assist their teaching.

45. The EDB encourages schools, having regard to the needs of their HI students, to nominate teachers to attend sign language courses offered by special schools for children with HI or other organizations (such as the Hong Kong Society for the Deaf, Chinese YMCA of

Hong Kong, Hong Kong Lutheran Social Service, etc.).

46. The EDB encourages individuals (including hearing persons and persons with HI) with an aspiration on Deaf education to join the teaching profession after completing relevant training. Persons with HI meeting the entry requirements may also apply for teacher training to obtain teacher qualification. There are quite a number of persons with HI with outstanding achievements in the community. Their success stories of striving for excellence will certainly inspire and have a positive impact on students with HI.

School Curriculum (New Senior Secondary Curriculum (NSS) included)

47. Other learning experience (OLE), covering moral & civic education, community service, career-related experiences, aesthetic development and physical development, is one of the three components in the NSS and forms an essential part of the school curriculum. Building on the existing strengths and practices, schools should develop different school-based modes (such as moral & civic education, class teacher periods, physical education lessons, music lessons, visual arts lessons, career guidance sessions, field work projects in a real context, service opportunities inside school, and activities organized for different social groups within the community, etc.) having regard to the needs, aspirations and abilities of their students. In fact, it is clearly stated in Booklet 5A of the Senior Secondary Curriculum Guide that “student opportunities” is one of the guiding principles of a school-based OLE programme. Schools should allocate OLE opportunities appropriately for all students (including students with SEN) of the school. When planning OLE programmes, with respect to a diversity of needs, schools should, under reasonable conditions, provide students with a variety of choices to facilitate the balanced development of students. As in the case of similar arrangements for other students, schools should make comprehensive considerations, such as providing appropriate support measures to ensure that students are learning in a safe environment.

48. In addition, schools can harness a variety of community resources to strengthen their OLE programmes. Many government departments / community groups are willing to support school functions and foster partnerships with schools by providing financial help, expertise, community facilities and appropriate learning experiences, etc.

49. Students with SEN will not be deprived of their right to the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education school-based assessment (SBA). According to the SBA Teachers’ Handbook issued by the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA),

schools may provide special arrangements to these students depending on their situations when it comes to SBA tasks. The provision of such arrangements allows these students to be equitably assessed under suitable conditions without having an unfair advantage. Under exceptional circumstances, principals may put their cases to the HKEAA and ask for special consideration as necessary, which may include exemption from part or whole of the SBA tasks. For details, please refer to paragraphs 50 to 52 below.

Special Examination Arrangements

Internal Examinations

50. The EDB has been advising schools to provide special examination arrangements for students with SEN and encouraging these students to participate in internal examinations as far as possible. The assessment is a platform for teachers to gauge the learning progress of their students and adjust their teaching accordingly to facilitate learning and for students to demonstrate the knowledge or skills mastered. The decision to grant exemption should be jointly made by teachers, students and parents at case conferences or Individual Education Plan meetings, with reference to professional opinions. The guide “Special Arrangements for Internal Examinations for Students with SEN” published by the EDB in 2009 has listed out the appropriate special examination arrangements for HI students. It includes that teachers may exempt HI students from parts of the examination having regard for their severity of HI. For example, students with moderately severe or above levels of HI may be exempted from parts of the examination which require listening for providing the answers (e.g. dictation, and the listening part of Putonghua and Music subjects), and students with severe or profound HI may be exempted from oral examination.

Public Examinations

51. The HKEAA is dedicated to providing reliable and equitable examination and assessment services. Candidates with SEN (including candidates with PD, VI and HI) can apply for special examination arrangements. The provision of such services allows these candidates to be equitably assessed under suitable conditions without having an unfair advantage over other candidates. The public examination of Liberal Studies comprises three parts: two written papers and the Independent Enquiry Studies (IES) as the assignment for SBA. The assessment objectives do not include listening and oral presentation skills. For the IES, teachers may devise assessment activities in the “Process” according to students’ special needs and provide guidance to help these students design appropriate enquiry plans.

52. The HKEAA welcomes the suggestions from the deputations regarding the question papers for candidates with VI, and will actively explore ways to improve the quality of Braille question papers with the production organization(s), especially the pictures in examination papers.

Higher Education

53. The Government is committed to providing youngsters (including students with SEN) with flexible and diversified study pathways with multiple entry and exit points. Under the principle of institutional autonomy, post-secondary education institutions can determine how to allocate their resources to assist students with SEN. We understand that institutions provide various special arrangements and support services to assist students with SEN according to their specific needs and study programmes. These measures include: appointing a one-stop coordinator to liaise with various departments and provide necessary information and referral service to students with SEN; assigning academic advisers to provide counselling and guidance service; providing flexible examination and assessment arrangements (e.g. special examination venues and papers, answer books with wider line-spacing, longer examination time, extra rest time during examination, computer-based examination in lieu of paper, alternative assessment methods, etc.); arranging flexible course enrolment; providing special learning support measures (e.g. extra tutorials and early dissemination of handouts, provision of professional sign language interpreter, note taker and accompanying helper, etc.); making available suitable hostel facilities in campus as well as other learning and amenity facilities (e.g. special resources room in library for students with VI, barrier-free access and facilities, etc.); offering scholarships and bursaries; procuring and providing appropriate equipment or devices (e.g. desktop CCTV, automatic page turner, hearing aid, FM system, etc.); assisting in building up social networks and enlisting peer support; and providing career guidance, etc.

54. In the 2013-14 Budget, the Financial Secretary proposed to make two separate injections of \$20 million each, totaling \$40 million, into the HKSAR Government Scholarship Fund and the Self-financing Post-secondary Education Fund to establish scholarships to give recognition to deserving post-secondary students with SEN in the pursuit of academic and other excellence. The Finance Committee of the Legislative Council approved the proposed injection in July 2013. We expect that about 100 students with SEN pursuing full-time locally-accredited post-secondary programmes will benefit from scholarships each year.

55. To further support students with SEN, the 2013-14 Budget also announced that \$12

million will be allocated to the Vocational Training Council each year for procuring equipment and learning aids for students with SEN, providing them with psychological and student counselling services, and enhancing the support for teaching and learning.

Home-school Co-operation and Public Education

56. According to the Disability Discrimination Ordinance (DDO), schools have a legal responsibility to admit students with SEN, including those with HI and VI, and provide them with appropriate support through the WSA to IE. Hence, all schools would admit students with SEN and provide them with necessary support. We are of the view that disclosing details of schools with SEN students admitted may lead to labeling effect on these schools. Furthermore, there is no direct correlation between the number of students with SEN admitted to a school and the effectiveness of the support provided. For the general public to understand the implementation of IE, schools are required to provide 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 for parents' reference.

57. The EDB is fully aware of the importance of public education in the drive to promote IE. We work together with the education sector, government departments and NGOs to raise public awareness of the IE concept and measures, and facilitate understanding and acceptance of students with SEN (including those with PD and VI) with the purpose of cultivating a caring and inclusive community through the use of different media. The EDB is exploring ways of promoting the concept of IE systematically through a variety of modes and channels, including broadcasting promotional videos on television, with a view to deepening the general public's understanding of IE so as to cultivate an inclusive community. In addition, the EDB will continue to provide schools with additional resources (such as the Learning Support Grant (LSG)) and professional support. Schools may deploy their resources flexibly with regard to their situations to organize promotional activities to accelerate the inclusive culture of the school.

58. The EDB has published a series of information leaflets designed to support HI students, including "How to Support Children with Hearing Impairment", "How to Help Hearing Impaired Students" and "Where Can Hearing Impaired Students Get Support After Leaving School". These leaflets have been uploaded onto the EDB's website for viewing by the parents and the general public. The EDB has also prepared booklets providing detailed information about the services of the outsourced hearing aid service provider for the benefit of students in need of such service and their parents. The CAS of DH provides children

diagnosed with HI at their centre with community resources and relevant information. Pamphlets about HI are also available at the CAS website for downloading by the public. The ENT specialist outpatient services of HA provide patients in need with a range of services, including audiological services. Patients with hearing problems may seek referral to the ENT specialist outpatient services from general outpatient clinics or private family doctors for treatment and examination. Information on the specialist outpatient services of HA is available at the HA website and clinics of the specialist outpatient services. The HA distributes information booklets about its services as appropriate to ensure that patients are well informed about the details of its services.

59. Having regard to the relevant circumstances and the needs of target audience, the EDB has already added captions and subtitles to some newly produced ETV programmes to help people with special needs (including students with HI) in understanding the content of the programmes. The EDB will continue to review the matters relating to adding subtitles to ETV programmes. Subject to the availability of resources, subtitles will be added to more ETV programmes progressively to facilitate effective learning among students with SEN. The EDB will also explore the needs and feasibility of adding sign language to ETV programmes in due course.

Support for Families

60. For children with developmental disorders, 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. The MCHCs of DH offer relevant guidance to parents through its pamphlets on child development and parenting as well as other information to involve parents in monitoring their children's growth and development. The CAS of DH provides interim support services for parents, such as parenting programmes, workshops and practical training, etc. to give them an understanding of their children's situation so that better care and early intervention can be given accordingly. The professional team under HA provides the parents and carers of children suffering from developmental disorders with knowledge about the condition in order to enhance their understanding of the symptoms and treatment needs. The SWD provides children with disabilities from birth to six years old, including those with PD, VI and HI, with early intervention through pre-school rehabilitation services targeted at enhancing their physical, psychological and social developments with the aim of improving their chances of attending ordinary schools and engaging in daily activities. Assistance is also given to help their families meet their special needs. Moreover, through its District Support Centres for

Persons with Disabilities, the SWD provides one-stop support and training services for persons with disabilities (including children with disabilities) in their respective districts to facilitate their integration into the community. Training activities, educational courses, talks, workshops are also organized for carers to enhance their caring ability. Meanwhile, the Parents / Relatives Resource Centre also holds social and recreational activities for parents / carers of children with disabilities to promote experience sharing and mutual support. In addition, the EDB has published the Parent Guide on the WSA to IE in 2008/09 school year. The Guide is uploaded onto the EDB's website for public access. Parents could obtain information in relation to the identification and assessment procedures of different types of SEN, as well as relevant information on support strategies, etc. We also publish an online newsletter named “融情” regularly to provide parents and the public with information on special education and experiences in promoting IE.

Cross-sectoral Collaboration

61. As mentioned in paragraph 10 above, children diagnosed by medical practitioners or audiologists as having persistent HI are supported by the HA and EDB according to their respective expertise (i.e. healthcare and educational services). On the provision of amplification devices, the EDB provides free hearing aid fitting to children with HI in need, including audiological reassessment, hearing aid fine-tuning, and making and repair of earmoulds, etc. The HA performs cochlear implant surgeries for clinical eligible children with severe to profound HI. Starting from April 2013, the HA has included the replacement of external speech processors of cochlear implants as a non-drug item supported by the SF to provide financial relief to patients in need.

Other Views and Suggestions

62. In order to assist schools and parents in settling disputes, and to safeguard the right to equal opportunity in education for students with disabilities, the EDB has established a 3-tier mediation mechanism for handling complaints about IE. The arrangement is as follows: (1) School-based Complaint Procedure: schools and parents resolve a dispute through negotiation at school level. To uphold the spirit of school-based management, every school should put in place a school-based complaint procedure for handling complaints from parents or students. Schools are advised to follow the established procedure for handling complaints about support for students with SEN; (2) Mediation Mechanism of the EDB: if the parents and schools fail to reach a settlement, the case can be referred to the corresponding Regional Education Office (REO) of the EDB. The Bureau will arrange a mediation

meeting for the two parties to work out a solution to the dispute; and (3) Case Study Group: if the dispute cannot be resolved, the EDB will approach the Advisory Panel on Mediation Mechanism under the DDO to form a Case Study Group. The Group will review the case in an objective and fair manner, and will put forward a mediation proposal to the EDB. We hope that through mutual support and joint efforts between schools, parents and the EDB, cases of possible disability discrimination in education can be settled so that students can learn happily in an environment meeting their individual needs so as to develop their potentials to the full.

63. To support schools in catering for students with SEN, the EDB has been providing all ordinary schools with additional resources on top of the regular subvention. The additional resources include the LSG which is calculated according to the number of students with SEN and the tier of support required. Apart from the LSG, schools are also given various resources, for example, funding for remedial teaching, additional teachers to cater for secondary students with low academic achievement and the Capacity Enhancement Grant, etc. Schools may pool and flexibly deploy the LSG and other school-based resources for employing additional teaching staff and assistants or procuring professional services to render appropriate support for students with SEN. From the perspective of use of resources, schools may, having regard to students' needs, pool and use resources available more effectively and flexibly. Moreover, from outside service providers, teaching staff may learn and acquire the relevant professional skills, and hence further enhance their ability in catering for students with SEN. If parents think that their children have special needs in learning or adjustment, they should approach the schools about this so that schools can provide their children with appropriate support. As the resources currently available are quite comprehensive in scope, a new fund is considered not only unnecessary but may also bring about duplication and diversion of resources. Through daily interaction with students, the teaching staff of the schools is well positioned to have a full picture of the learning pattern and needs of every student with SEN, as well as the progress they made after receiving support services. Adjustments to support strategy can therefore be made accordingly. It is our view that the present arrangements, in which the EDB provides resources, professional support and teacher training for schools' flexible deployment in support of students with SEN according to their needs, is more effective in addressing the specific needs of individual students.

64. Different sections of the EDB will provide appropriate support services to students with VI according to the scope of services under their charge. Joint effort will be pooled together to review issues related to the education of children with VI to ensure the support

services commensurate with their needs. Apart from providing follow up on the effectiveness of the RSP, professional staff under the EDB also pays regular visits to schools to offer advice and assistance in developing school-based inclusive policy and measures, as well as monitoring the learning progress of students and effectiveness of the support measures.

Views Sought

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

Education Bureau
September 2013