

For information

**Panel on Education  
Subcommittee on Integrated Education**

**Response to Views and Concerns Raised  
at Meeting on 3 October 2013**

**Purpose**

At the Subcommittee's request, 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 meeting on 3 October 2013.

**Response to Views and Concerns**

**Identification and Assessment Mechanisms**

2. The Education Bureau (EDB) has been encouraging schools to adopt the 3-Tier Intervention Model for early identification and intervention of students with special educational needs (SEN), including those with mental derangement (MD). The EDB has laid down in the School Administration Guide a guideline entitled 'How Schools can Help Students with Mental Health Problems', which sets out ways for early identification of students with mental health problems who are in need of support as well as important points to note when planning and implementing support measures. In the School Administration Guide, we have also advised schools to encourage parents to report the medical history of their children and keep students' health (including mental health) records properly and systematically for reference when organising school activities. Specifically, if teachers suspect any student with MD and in need of professional assessment or consultation services, they may approach professionals in the school such as school social worker who will communicate with the student and the parents concerned. Where necessary, the students identified will be referred to psychiatrists for diagnosis and medication. School professionals, including Student Guidance Teachers/Personnel, school social workers and educational psychologists (EPs), will regularly review and follow up on their progress.

**Support Services**

3. The EDB has been encouraging parents and schools to maintain close communication and co-operation in supporting students with SEN. We have reminded schools of the need to establish a systematic and regular communication mechanism for

enhanced communication and co-operation with parents. Schools should also encourage parents to take part in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the support services for their children, for example, inviting parents to attend case conferences and reporting to them regularly the learning progress of their children, etc. To enhance parents' understanding of their roles, the EDB issued and uploaded onto its website the 'Parent Guide on Whole School Approach (WSA) to IE' in the 2008/09 school year, providing parents with information on the procedures for identifying and assessing different types of SEN, and on various support strategies. At present, every primary school has a student guidance personnel and every secondary school has a school social worker (provided by the Social Welfare Department (SWD) through non-governmental organisations (NGOs)) who work closely with parents, and support needy students and their parents individually or through group programmes.

4. Regarding pre-school rehabilitation services subvented by the SWD, both Special Child Care Centres and Early Education and Training Centres have centre-based social workers who provide support services to parents to help them accept and cater for the special needs of their children. Moreover, the SWD, through its District Support Centres for Persons with Disabilities, provides one-stop support and training services for persons with disabilities (including children with disabilities) living in their respective districts to facilitate their integration into the community, and offers training activities, educational courses, talks, workshops, etc. for their carers so as to enhance their caring ability. In addition, the Parents/Relatives Resource Centres also organise social and recreational activities for parents/carers of children with disabilities to facilitate experience sharing and mutual support.

5. As for welfare services for school-aged children, 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 supportive 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, forming support groups for students with SEN and their parents.

6. The SWD has also deployed medical social workers to the Child Assessment Service of the Department of Health and psychiatric wards and clinics of the Hospital Authority (HA) with a view to working in collaboration with the team of medical professionals to jointly formulate children's rehabilitation plans and assist in the provision of appropriate support and services. Currently, there are 65 Integrated Family Service Centres and two Integrated Services Centres, 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. Families with students with SEN may also approach these Centres for assistance should the need arise.

7. The EDB has been collaborating with tertiary institutions in developing support strategies for student with SEN as well as theory-driven and evidence-based teaching models and materials. To further enhance the rigor in the identification of students with Specific Learning Difficulties in Reading and Writing (SpLD), the EDB and three tertiary institutions set up the Hong Kong Specific Learning Difficulties Research Team in 1998. The team has published a number of assessment tools for use by EPs and screening checklists for teachers. In the 2006/07 school year, the EDB supported and participated in a five-year cross-sector joint project “READ & WRITE: A Jockey Club Learning Support Network” to explore ways to enhance the support services for students with SpLD. Separately, the EDB has formed a research team with two universities in the 2013/14 school year to study how to enhance the higher order thinking of students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD).

8. Besides, the EDB has also been working with tertiary institutions in developing screening tools with local norms, such as the Observation Checklist for Teachers for early identification of Primary one (P1) students with learning difficulties and the Hong Kong Test of Chinese Reading and Writing Abilities Assessment for Secondary School Students. For identification of students with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD), the EDB, in collaboration with the Chinese University of Hong Kong, has developed the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), and the Strengths and Weaknesses of AD/HD - Symptoms and Normal-behaviour (SWAN). The SDQ and SWAN have been made available for use by EPs since 2010. We have also prepared resource packages, such as the Fun With Reading and Writing, Fun with Maths: A Resource Pack for Supporting Primary School Students in Mathematics and Development of Executive Skills, for use by EPs in supporting students with SEN. In tandem, through the Quality Education Fund, the EDB encourages educational institutions to launch pilot projects on effective learning, including those on catering for students with SEN.

9. The EDB has kept the implementation of IE under ongoing review and introduced improvements wherever necessary and practicable. In 2005, we set up the Task Force on IE in Mainstream Schools, which comprises representatives from the school sector, tertiary institutions, other government departments, NGOs and parent groups. Through regular meetings of the Task Force, the EDB updates its members on the latest progress of implementing IE and seeks their views on improvement measures. In 2005, the EDB invited a renowned British scholar Dr Rea Reason to make recommendations on education services

for local students with SpLD. Dr Reason endorsed the EDB's direction in promoting WSA and teacher training and suggested that Hong Kong should learn from the experiences of Britain and the United States in implementing the Tiered Intervention Model to help students with SpLD. Through ongoing collaboration with tertiary institutions, the EDB subsequently developed the evidence-based tiered intervention strategy and model for supporting students with SpLD. Currently, we are piloting the tiered intervention model for enhancing the support for students with ASD.

## **Education Services**

10. The EDB has a very clear zero-tolerance policy for bullying in schools in any form and on any ground. We have issued guidelines to all schools, requesting them to take the matter seriously and implement proactive measures to ensure the safety of students at school and create a harmonious school environment. It is noted that schools generally implement the anti-bullying policy in line with the principles set out in our guidelines. The EDB has regularly organised seminars and workshops to remind schools to follow the basic principle of zero tolerance as a means to prevent bullying in school stringently. In addition, we provide schools with relevant resource packages to raise teachers' awareness of bullying and assist schools in formulating school-based strategy to handle, follow up and prevent such cases. The EDB also offers school-based follow-up support to individual schools in need of assistance.

11. We also encourage schools to adopt the WSA to provide students with counselling, preventive and developmental programmes. All primary and secondary schools are at present provided with student guidance personnel and school social workers from the resources of the EDB and SWD respectively. Under the WSA, a multi-disciplinary team comprising guidance and discipline teachers, school social worker/student guidance personnel, class/subject teachers and EPs will take care of students in need (including those with intellectual disability (ID) and MD) within their respective areas of expertise.

12. The EDB has been encouraging schools to adopt the WSA in implementing IE to provide appropriate support to students with SEN. We understand that schools have various measures in place (such as peer support schemes and study groups) to help students adapt to the learning environment and integrate into school life. Other Learning Experiences (OLE) is an integral part of the New Senior Secondary Curriculum covering different domains, including moral & civic education and community service, etc. We encourage schools to build on their existing strengths and practices, and develop appropriate school-based modes and diversified activities having regard to the needs, aspirations and abilities of their students. In the light of their own circumstances and needs, schools may also incorporate peer support activities into the OLE of the New Senior Secondary Curriculum. It is noted that schools

have actively encouraged students to accept, and take the initiative to help, students with SEN so as to enable the inclusive culture to take root in schools.

### **Professional Support**

13. The EDB has been liaising and working closely with the HA via different platforms to review and discuss ways to strengthen the existing notification and support mechanism to ensure students with MD can receive appropriate support. The EDB has already reached a consensus with the seven district centres of the Early Assessment Service for Young People (E.A.S.Y.) under the HA, in which schools could contact the respective district service centres direct to seek prompt expert advice, assessment and support when needed. Moreover, EPs have regular professional meetings with psychiatrists of the HA's Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Services in individual regions to review and discuss as necessary the conditions of students referred and their support plans.

14. Schools have been providing early intervention for students with SEN, including those with MD. If teachers suspect students have MD and need professional assessment or consultation services, they may approach school professionals (such as school social workers and EPs) who will communicate with the students and their parents concerned to discuss support arrangements and where appropriate, refer the students to psychiatrists for diagnosis. For diagnosed cases, subject to the consent of the parents, psychiatrists will inform schools promptly so that the student support teams in schools can arrange appropriate follow-up actions. According to the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance, the HA may, subject to the consent of the parents, transfer the information about the students' medical conditions to schools for follow-up actions. In the same vein, schools may also submit the aforesaid information from the HA to the EDB upon obtaining parents' consent.

15. Under the WSA, a systematic and on-going mechanism is established in schools to cater for students with diverse learning needs. To support students with MD, schools will help them adapt to school life in tandem with the medical treatment and rehabilitation requirements. The student support teams will maintain communication with the students concerned and their parents to understand their needs. The teams will plan and evaluate the support strategies for the students according to their adjustment conditions in schools. There should also be regular monitoring, review and evaluation of the students' conditions as well as the effectiveness of the support rendered. Subject to the consent of parents, schools will arrange multi-disciplinary case conferences where necessary for EPs, psychiatrists and relevant professionals to discuss appropriate support measures for the students. Relevant support measures include creating a caring learning environment, making accommodations on learning and teaching, adjusting class arrangements, and providing emotional counselling and peer support, etc. Schools will keep records of case conferences properly to facilitate

follow-up actions. Under the existing mechanism, schools are not required to submit to the EDB information about any individual multi-disciplinary case conference. We also encourage parents to discuss with schools the particular needs of their children so that appropriate support is offered in accordance with the student's conditions and needs. Schools will tailor make support plans for students, such as arranging individual counselling, devising behaviour contracts, reward schemes, personal growth plans and other student-oriented support strategies, arranging support networks, deploying appropriate learning strategies, creating a safe and quiet environment as well as maintaining regular communication with the parents.

16. To support schools in catering for students with SEN, on top of the regular subvention, the EDB has been providing all ordinary schools with additional resources, professional support and teacher training. The additional resources include the Learning Support Grant (LSG) calculated according to the number of students with SEN and the tier of support required, Enhanced Speech Therapy Grant, additional teachers and funding provided under the Integrated Education Programme/Intensive Remedial Teaching Programme as well as additional teachers to cater for secondary students with low academic achievement. With effect from the 2013/14 school year, the EDB raised the ceiling of the LSG from \$1 million to \$1.5 million per school per year to strengthen support for schools having admitted a larger number of students with SEN. To further support primary and secondary schools in catering for students with SEN, the EDB has been progressively extending the School-based Educational Psychology Service (and increasing the number of EPs correspondingly) as planned so that more schools can benefit from this comprehensive support service. In the 2013/14 school year, 579 public sector primary and secondary schools are receiving the service, representing about 68% of the public sector schools in the territory. We anticipate that the service will cover all public sector primary and secondary schools by the 2016/17 school year. To keep pace with the rise in the number of students with SEN and to enhance support measures, the estimated expenditure for the service has increased by about 25% to \$1,076 million for the 2013/14 school year as compared to the \$860 million for the 2008/09 school year.

17. The HA's multi-disciplinary team, comprising psychiatrists, psychiatric nurse, clinical psychologists and occupational therapists, offers mental health services. The adoption of this integrated and multi-disciplinary approach allows flexible deployment of manpower to meet service and operational needs. The number of doctors in psychiatric specialty in HA went up from 317 in 2010-11 to 334 in 2012-13. The HA will continue to review the manpower needs on a regular basis and make appropriate arrangements in manpower planning and deployment so as to meet service needs.

18. Under the existing education policy, the EDB will, subject to the assessment/recommendation of specialists and the consent of the parents, refer children with various degrees of ID to special schools to receive intensive support services. Other children with SEN may attend ordinary schools. Special schools for children with mild, moderate, severe ID provide different curricula that meet the special needs of the students. Students with limited intelligence are generally able to participate in an adapted ordinary curriculum and all along, they enroll in ordinary schools through the school places allocation systems. In order to support ordinary schools in providing appropriate services to students with SEN (including those with limited intelligence), EDB has been providing schools with additional resources, including LSG, Enhanced Speech Therapy Grant and additional teachers to cater for secondary students with low academic achievement. Schools may pool and flexibly deploy various resources available for employing additional teaching staff and assistants or procuring professional services to enhance the learning effectiveness of students with limited intelligence.

19. On professional support, the EDB provides educational psychology services for schools. EPs offer consultation to teachers on the formulation and implementation of support plans for students with SEN, including those with limited intelligence. At the teacher level, EPs equip teachers with strategies to cater for learner diversity through school-based or district-based teacher training. At the school system level, EPs give professional advice on school policies, measures and resource deployment to meet the needs of students with diverse needs.

20. On teacher training, from the 2007/08 school year onwards, the EDB has been providing serving teachers with structured training aimed at supporting students with SEN. Training targets have been set and schools are advised to make appropriate arrangements for their teachers to receive training. The training covers teaching strategies for students with SEN, such as differentiated instruction, multi-sensory approach and rehearsing skills in daily life context, etc., which are applicable to students with limited intelligence. Besides, the EDB has incorporated topics on catering for students with SEN and spearheading the implementation of IE into the training programme for aspiring school principals and induction training for newly-appointed school principals to enhance their capacity in steering the implementation of WSA in IE to cater for the diverse needs of students.

21. As for individual students with limited intelligence who have significant difficulties in adjusting to ordinary schooling, there is a possibility that they may have other SEN, such as ASD or AD/HD. If they have not shown desirable improvements despite strengthened and additional support, professionals will further review their educational needs with their parents and teachers to assess whether they will benefit more in ordinary schools or special schools.

On the recommendation of the professional and subject to the consent of parents, students in need may be referred to special schools through established channels.

22. In sum, the EDB places students with limited intelligence in ordinary schools in consideration of their best interests. Results of a number of research projects have also shown that students with SEN can benefit in respect of language development, social skills and adaptive functioning through interactions with their able-bodied peers in ordinary schools. In line with the promulgation of the UNESCO and the Salamanca Statement, the principle of inclusiveness is enshrined in our education measures and policy. In principle, all children, with the exception of those with more severe or multiple disabilities, will be admitted to ordinary schools. Our arrangement for students with various educational needs (including those with limited intelligence) to attend ordinary schools as far as possible is in line with the global trend in the development of IE.

### **Teacher Training**

23. To support schools in arranging for teachers to attend the basic, advanced and thematic (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.

24. We understand that schools may have to revise their work and teacher training priorities in response to the competing needs arising from various educational issues. In this connection, apart from commissioning tertiary institutions to run the above-mentioned structured courses, the EDB also provides teachers with short-term training activities in different themes and forms, including seminars, workshops, as well as good practice 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 should pursue continuing professional development having regard to the developmental needs of their schools as well as their own teaching needs.

25. Apart from in-service training, the EDB also attaches much importance to the pre-service training for prospective teachers. We have striven to encourage teacher education institutions to make “supporting students with SEN” or relevant topic a compulsory subject for the pre-service education programmes. The institutions have responded positively and

this subject is now included in all of their pre-service teacher training programmes to enhance prospective teachers' knowledge and skills in this area.

26. We have set training targets in the light of the present teacher training landscape in ordinary schools as well as the real-life situation where both the types and number of students with SEN admitted by schools vary across years. We have been encouraging schools to make appropriate arrangements for different teachers in the schools to receive BAT training. Teachers who have received such training may share the knowledge and skills acquired with their colleagues and take the lead to support students with SEN through the WSA and adopting appropriate teaching strategies.

### **Whether to Consider Classifying Students with MD as Students with SEN at Policy Level**

27. Students with MD need treatment from medical professionals. With proper treatment and rehabilitation service, normally they can overcome their difficulties which are mostly transient in nature. Hence, for these students, the main role played by schools is to help them adapt to school life in tandem with the medical treatment and rehabilitation requirements. At present, school professionals, including Student Guidance Teachers/Personnel, school social workers and EPs, provide counselling to students having regard to their conditions and needs. Multi-disciplinary case conferences will be arranged, where necessary, for professionals (including EPs and psychiatrists) to discuss appropriate support plans for the students. The EDB has laid down in its School Administration Guide a guideline entitled 'How Schools can Help Students with Mental Health Problems'. In addition, we have organised related thematic training activities and seminars jointly with the HA to enhance the knowledge and skills of student guidance personnel and professional supporting personnel, as well as to review and discuss how to further enhance the existing notification and cross-disciplinary support mechanism. For students with significant adjustment difficulties, including those having severe emotional and behavioural problems induced by their MD, the EDB may base on needs consider providing schools with a time-limited grant for employing teaching assistants to help the students concerned follow classroom routines and learn effectively. All in all, while MD is not classified as a type of SEN, schools are able to support students with MD through the existing measures.

### **Advice Sought**

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

Education Bureau  
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