



中華人民共和國香港特別行政區政府總部教育局
Education Bureau
Government Secretariat, The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
The People's Republic of China

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24 September 2013

Clerk to Panel
(Attn: Mr KWONG Kam-fai)
Legislative Council Panel on Education
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong
(Fax No.: 3151 7052)

Dear Mr Kwong,

Panel on Education
Issues related to the weight of schoolbags and school textbooks

Thank you for your letter dated 9 September 2013. The Education Bureau (EDB) attaches great importance to the weight of school bags and school textbooks. It is without doubt that the cooperation of all stakeholders is essential to helping reduce the weight of school bags effectively. Regarding the captioned issues, our response is set out below.

Circular and guidelines on reducing the weight of school bags have been issued to primary and secondary schools before the commencement of each school year since 2003. Schools are requested to implement practicable and effective measures to reduce the weight of school bags. The suggested measures include:

- reviewing and suitably arranging the timetable so that students are not required to bring a large number of textbooks, exercise books and heavy materials to schools on the same day;
- designing a variety of approaches and styles of assignments (such as loose-leaf worksheets or single-page worksheets);
- providing storage facilities and helping students develop a good habit of using those facilities in a proper and effective manner;
- fostering students' habit of packing school bags every day; and
- discouraging students from bringing unnecessary items to school.

Furthermore, we have launched a series of measures, including publishing articles in newspapers, for example, the Education UPDATE column of the Headline Daily, and distributing parent pamphlets on "How to Help Children Reduce the Weight of School Bags" (For details, please visit this website: www.edb.gov.hk/perc), aiming to encourage parents to discuss the reasons and solutions of overweight school bags with their children. Parents are also encouraged to reflect their views and practicable suggestions of reducing the weight of school bags to schools for consideration. With the cooperation of all involved parties, it is hoped that effective measures of reducing the weight of school bags are adopted to facilitate the healthy growth of our students.

As regards textbook publication, the EDB holds regular meetings with the textbook publishers associations to discuss matters related to textbooks including the layout and binding method of textbooks. We also issue the "Guiding Principles for Quality Printed Textbooks" and "Guidelines for Printing of Textbooks" for publishers' reference. We advise them to observe all the vetting criteria, and adopt methods to reduce the weight of textbooks, for example:

- publishing textbooks in separate volumes / modules according to topics;
- printing textbooks and workbooks separately;
- using lighter paper for printing textbooks and reducing the margins of each page; and
- using loose-leaf / flexible binding.

For schools, publishers and public's easy reference, the above information is available from the EDB website (www.edb.gov.hk/textbook).

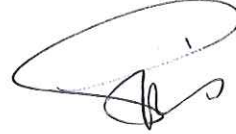
Moreover, the EDB organises seminars and issues circular memorandums to schools annually reiterating the principles and procedures of the textbook selection. Prices and quality apart, we particularly advise schools to pay due consideration to the weight of textbooks in the course of selecting textbooks or learning materials. And such information has also been included in the EDB's "Recommended Textbook List" (www.edb.gov.hk/rtl) since 2002.

It is our usual practice to provide all public sector schools with a one-off block grant annually so that they may use the grant flexibly to purchase learning and teaching materials and meet their daily operational needs. Schools can exercise their professional judgement, for example, in purchasing reference books, story books or other relevant learning materials for students' use inside and beyond the classroom.

We have launched the E-textbook Market Development Scheme (EMADS) since June 2012 with an aim to encourage potential and aspiring e-textbook developers to develop a diverse range of e-textbooks in line with our local curricula, as well as to facilitate the trying out of a quality vetting and assurance mechanism for e-textbooks through the Partner Schools with a view to progressively drawing up a full-fledged "Recommended Textbook List for e-textbooks". We expect to conclude factors contributing to the success in the promotion and the use of e-textbooks as well as e-learning in the long run from the experience of the Partner Schools and the e-textbook developers during the development process. It is expected that the first batch of

e-textbooks developed under the EMADS will be in the market for schools' use in the 2014/15 school year which will increase consumers' choice.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, sweeping loop at the top, followed by a smaller loop and a final flourish that ends in a small hook.

(Stephen Y W Yip)
for Secretary for Education