

Legislative Council Meeting of 26 March 2014
Motion on “Properly dealing with problems arising from
cross-boundary students”

Progress Report

The motion on “Properly dealing with problems arising from cross-boundary students” (**Annex**) was passed at the Legislative Council meeting of 26 March 2014. This paper reports the stance and follow-up actions taken by the Administration with regard to the motion.

2. The number of cross-boundary students (CBS) has been on the rise in recent years. However, following the implementation of the “zero delivery quota” for Mainland expectant mothers in early 2013, the number of CBS is expected to decrease gradually in the coming few years. In other words, the drastic surge of CBS is only a transient phenomenon. Since the issues relating to CBS are multi-faceted, the Administration will deliberate on effective strategies through the coordination of work among bureaux and departments concerned. Inter-departmental working groups will be set up to tackle the various issues as and when necessary. At present, an inter-departmental steering committee has been set up to handle issues relating to the transportation arrangements and clearance procedures for CBS.

3. To cater for the transportation needs of tender age CBS, the Administration has put in place a number of facilitating measures where practicable to ensure safe and speedy commuting of CBS. The Government will continue to enhance as far as possible facilitating border crossing measures for CBS to attend schools in Hong Kong. That notwithstanding, there are limits to the handling capacities of the boundary control points (BCPs). As the facilitating measures implemented at various BCPs may not be able to meet the needs of all CBS, parents are requested to consider carefully their own arrangements for their children to attend schools in Hong Kong. In fact, all along, a number of parents have been sending their children to schools by their own means.

4. It is difficult to predict accurately whether babies born to Mainland women in Hong Kong would return to Hong Kong to attend Primary 1 (P1) education, not to mention the actual number and date of them settling in Hong Kong. Some of them will choose to attend school in Hong Kong as CBS. Their number and choice of BCPs through which they access Hong Kong are subject to significant year-on-year changes due to family factors, distribution of places of residence and adjustment of relevant policies, etc. Hence, premised on the children applicants' demand for P1 places and the long-term development of existing schools, the Education Bureau (EDB) will adopt flexible arrangements which include borrowing school places from neighbouring school nets, making use of remaining classrooms and changing other rooms into additional classrooms and where necessary, temporarily allocating more students to each P1 class to flexibly increase school places in individual school nets/districts to cope with the transient demand. The EDB will also adopt a pragmatic and proactive approach in exploring the feasibility of recycling vacant school premises and building more classrooms in individual schools. To cope with the transient increase in demand for school places in individual school nets/districts, the EDB will liaise closely with the schools concerned.

5. On the other hand, the propensity of CBS for choosing schools in the North District has led to a shortfall of P1 places in the North District in recent years. Starting from the 2014/15 school year, the EDB provides applicant children residing in the Mainland with a separate Choice of Schools List for Central Allocation under the Primary One Admission (POA) System. Under this arrangement, a "dedicated school net" is provided for the CBS with a view to diverting them to other districts, hence alleviating the excessive demand for P1 places in the North District. This will help meet the demand from applicant children residing in Hong Kong while ensuring the right of CBS for allocating a public sector school place. As for the supply of school places in the North District, a new primary school premises in Area 36 of Fanling in the North District has been allocated to an existing primary school in the District for reprovisioning. Since there will be 36 classrooms in the new school premises, the school concerned may expand its total number of operating classes if necessary. It is originally anticipated that the new school premises will be completed in 2016 the earliest. However, the

completion date may be delayed as the Public Works Subcommittee and the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council was unable to vet the related funding application in this legislative year.

6. Regarding public sector Secondary 1 (S1) places, based on the population projections compiled by the Census and Statistics Department, it is expected that the number of S1 students will rebound steadily on a year-on-year basis from the 2017/18 school year onwards, and there will be sufficient S1 places to meet the demand as a whole.

7. The EDB will continue to liaise with major stakeholders to formulate pragmatic measures having balanced their different concerns with a view to minimising the impact of changes in student population, and collaborating with the sector to embrace the challenges in the transitional period.

8. The EDB announced in late April 2014 the admission arrangements for K1 in kindergartens (KGs) for the 2015/16 school year (hereafter referred as “2015/16 K1 Admission Arrangements”). The objectives of the “2015/16 K1 Admission Arrangements” are to avoid hoarding of more than one place by a child at any one time so as to enable the KGs to confirm enrolment for manpower planning, and to facilitate parents in securing a place for their children in a timely manner, and thus benefit all students concerned. The EDB has arranged briefings for both KGs and parents in May and June 2014 to enable them to have a better understanding about the “2015/16 K1 Admission Arrangements”.

9. The Government has been providing needy students (including CBS) with subsidy, disbursed on a non-accountable basis, through the Student Travel Subsidy Scheme (STSS) to cover the fares on public transport for travelling to and from schools within the boundaries of Hong Kong. We shall continue to review from time to time the operation of STSS to ensure the proper use of public money and the provision of appropriate assistance for needy students. For public sector and Direct Subsidy Scheme schools admitting newly arrived children, including children newly arrived from the Mainland as well as CBS, they can use School-based Support Scheme Grant to organise school-based support programmes to help these students integrate into the

local education system.

10. The EDB has been promoting a harmonious school culture under which all are equal. Schools are requested to comply with all the anti-discrimination ordinances. Besides, when formulating school policies including curriculum design and teaching, they should observe the principle of equal opportunities and avoid any form of discrimination. The EDB also encourages schools to cultivate an atmosphere of harmony and equality on the school campus.

11. Furthermore, 65 Integrated Family Service Centres (IFSCs) and two Integrated Services Centres (ISCs) operated by the Social Welfare Department (SWD) or non-governmental organisations over the territory will continue to provide needy individuals and families (including CBS and their families) 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, etc. Social workers of these centres will thoroughly assess and take care of the specific needs of service users and provide them with appropriate services including different community orientation programmes to enhance their social skills and positive psychology. In 2013-14, IFSCs conducted 268 groups and programmes specifically for new arrivals (including CBS). SWD will continue to keep in view the demand for the relevant services.

12. With the extension of student admission to include Type II children to the classes of minban schools in Shenzhen since last November, the number of minban schools in the Scheme will increase to nine in the 2014/15 school year. The EDB has paired up minban schools operating Classes for Hong Kong Students with local primary schools and through various exchange activities enhancing minban schools teachers' understanding of the local curriculum as well as the transition of Hong Kong students to local education system. We are arranging local secondary schools to pair up with these minban schools as sister schools as well. We will continue to collaborate with Shenzhen Municipal Education Bureau and explore different means to further enhance the professional support for teachers of minban schools.

13. The idea of establishing schools subsidized by the Hong Kong Government in Shenzhen to provide Hong Kong children with free education involves complicated issues and far-reaching implications, including school management and compliance issues, curriculum, welfare portability, etc. The Administration needs to obtain more information in order to have objective and thorough analyses of the proposed idea. Besides, a feasible option for the sustainable operation of these schools is also required.

14. We would also like to remind parents that commuting daily from the Mainland to schools in Hong Kong will impose pressure on children both mentally and physically. This is not conducive to students' learning and home-school cooperation. Parents should consider carefully and understand thoroughly the situation of the BCPs before deciding to arrange their children residing in the Mainland to commute daily to schools in Hong Kong. The Administration will continue to refine policies and measures so as to create conditions conducive to learning.

Education Bureau
July 2014

(Translation)

Motion on
“Properly dealing with problems arising from cross-boundary students”
moved by Hon TAM Yiu-chung
at the Council meeting of 26 March 2014

Motion as amended by Hon IP Kin-yuen, Hon James TIEN, Hon Michael TIEN and Hon TANG Ka-piu

That, given the continuously increasing number of cross-boundary students in recent years, the Administration has nonetheless made poor planning, and has never grasped the basic data on cross-boundary students (such as the ratio of ‘singly non-permanent resident students’ to ‘doubly non-permanent resident students’) and properly formulated any long-, medium- and short-term forecasts based on existing data, thus giving rise to quite a number of problems; a large number of cross-boundary students travelling to the districts near various immigration control points for attending school lead to keen competition for school places in New Territories districts, thereby affecting local students’ opportunities for admission to school in the vicinity of their residence and increasing the pressure on various land immigration control points; furthermore, cross-boundary students need to shuttle between two places and leave early and return late on school days, rendering them physically and mentally exhausted and posing danger to their personal safety, and long coach journeys also affect their studies in school; in this connection, this Council urges the Government to:

- (1) immediately set up an inter-departmental task force, which comprises representatives from the Education Bureau, the Social Welfare Department, the Immigration Department and the Transport and Housing Bureau, etc., to study the problems arising from cross-boundary students, including the demand for and supply of kindergarten places as well as primary and secondary school places in Hong Kong, and the impacts of cross-boundary students on education, transport, healthcare, social welfare, housing and the development of manpower resources in Hong Kong, so as to formulate more effective and comprehensive support strategies;
- (2) in dealing with the education problems arising from cross-boundary students, firmly uphold the principles of ‘simultaneously meeting the education needs of both local and cross-boundary students’ and ‘admission to school in the vicinity of residence’; having regard to cross-boundary students’ demand for school places, expeditiously make good planning for kindergarten places as well as primary and secondary

school places in various districts, and consult various stakeholders as early as possible, so as to avoid the dissatisfaction of schools and parents arising from inappropriate school place planning; and while increasing the number of places in the school net exclusively for cross-boundary primary students, also ensure local students' opportunities for admission to school in the vicinity of their residence, so as to avoid affecting local students' opportunities for attending school; at the same time, ensure that cross-boundary students can attend schools within reasonable coach journey distances;

- (3) alleviate the additional burden on schools arising from the need to cope with cross-boundary students, and provide schools with appropriate assistance and resources, such as offering a recurrent grant for admission of additional number of cross-boundary students and a one-off grant for the additional ancillary services arranged for cross-boundary students, so as to ensure that the existing quality of education will not be significantly affected, and that schools will have sufficient resources to meet the education needs of cross-boundary students;
- (4) having regard to the actual situation of families with Hong Kong-citizen children living in the Mainland, pursue with Mainland authorities the opportunities for providing compulsory education to Hong Kong-citizen children, specifically the conduct of studies in conjunction with Mainland authorities under the educational co-operation framework between two places on establishing Hong Kong-style schools in Shenzhen and setting up more schools and classes exclusively for Hong Kong-citizen children, so as to alleviate the education demand of Hong Kong-citizen children in Hong Kong;
- (5) commence collation and evaluation of data and information in a systematic and continuous manner, including the population characteristics of families with cross-boundary students and the intentions of cross-boundary students to study and work in Hong Kong in the future, so as to make more comprehensive and accurate planning for manpower resources;
- (6) allocate additional resources to social welfare organizations to enhance the services and support for cross-boundary students and their families, especially cross-boundary students with special education needs, and increase the opportunities for cross-boundary students to participate in and experience community activities in Hong Kong;

- (7) perfect the immigration arrangements and transportation support for cross-boundary students, including reviewing the quotas of Closed Area Permits for cross-boundary students and cross-boundary school coaches based on actual demand, and permitting more cross-boundary students to undergo on-board clearance, so that they can cross the boundary safely for attending school;
- (8) conduct a study on enacting legislation to regulate private hostels for cross-boundary students, so as to ensure the safety of cross-boundary students in Hong Kong; and
- (9) conduct publicity among the public to disseminate a positive message on accepting cross-boundary students, enabling cross-boundary students to be free from discrimination, grow up healthily and happily, and develop a sense of belonging to Hong Kong; and
- (10) introduce concessionary measures to attract more Hong Kong teachers to teach in the Mainland, so as to assist Hong Kong-citizen children living in the Mainland in familiarizing themselves with the teaching mode adopted in Hong Kong, making parents let their Hong Kong-citizen children stay in the Mainland for attending schools without any worry, thereby alleviating the problems of cross-boundary students; this can also alleviate the problem of surplus teachers in Hong Kong and provide Hong Kong teachers with opportunities to acquire teaching experience in the Mainland; the proposed concessionary measures should include allowing Hong Kong teachers with provident fund accounts to keep their accounts during their periods of teaching in the Mainland, providing special living and transport allowances, and encouraging schools in Hong Kong to give priority consideration to recruit teachers who had been teaching in the Mainland for certain years, etc.; and
- (11) conduct studies in conjunction with Mainland authorities on establishing schools subsidized by Hong Kong Government in Shenzhen to provide Hong Kong-citizen children with free education, and the schools concerned must operate in accordance with the requirements of the Education Bureau of Hong Kong, recruit qualified Hong Kong teachers and adopt Hong Kong's teaching modes and curriculum, thus facilitating these children to come to Hong Kong to sit for public examinations and pursue further education in the future;
- (12) conduct a longitudinal study on the social life and psychological development of cross-boundary students;

- (13) increase the number of places in the school net exclusively for districts with the largest number of cross-boundary primary students such as Tai Po and the North District, etc., so as to alleviate the pressure faced by parents when applying for school admission for local students;
- (14) allocate additional resources to non-governmental organizations for cultivating cross-boundary students' social skills and positive psychology; and
- (15) provide school coach fee subsidy to families with cross-boundary students having financial difficulties.