

**For information
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**Legislative Council Panel on Education
Subcommittee on Integrated Education**

Cross-sectoral Collaboration in Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on how the Education Bureau (EDB) supports students with special educational needs (SEN) through cross-sectoral collaboration.

Background

2. The EDB implements integrated education (IE) in accordance with five basic principles, namely early identification, early intervention, Whole School Approach (WSA), home-school co-operation and cross-sectoral collaboration. Under these basic principles, the EDB has been providing schools with additional resources, professional support and teacher training for cultivating an inclusive culture in schools and providing suitable learning environment and teaching adaptations for students having regard to their learning needs.

3. On cross-sectoral collaboration, the EDB has been working closely with tertiary institutions, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and relevant government departments in developing diversified teaching and remedial resources, conducting professional training activities and pilot projects, and organising a variety of promotional activities with a view to further enhancing the early identification and early intervention mechanism, promoting the WSA and strengthening home-school co-operation in catering for students with SEN. The collaboration arrangements between the EDB and various sectors in promoting IE in recent years are set out in paragraphs 5 to 24 below.

4. Apart from EDB's collaboration with various sectors, schools may flexibility deploy the Learning Support Grant and pool together other resources to procure professional services having regard to the needs of their students. Through the support of professional knowledge and services from other sectors (including tertiary institutions and NGOs / private service providers), schools' professional capacity in catering for students with SEN is strengthened.

Collaboration between EDB and Various Sectors

Collaboration between tertiary institutions, academics and NGOs

5. The EDB has been collaborating with tertiary institutions in developing screening and assessment tools with local norms. Set up by the EDB and three tertiary institutions since 1998, the Hong Kong Specific Learning Difficulties Research Team has published a number of assessment tools for use by educational psychologists (EPs) and screening checklists for teachers, including the Hong Kong Test of Specific Learning Difficulties in Reading and Writing (SpLD) for Primary School Students, the Hong Kong Test of SpLD for Junior Secondary School Students, the Hong Kong Behaviour Checklist of SpLD for Primary School Students, and the Hong Kong Behaviour Checklist of SpLD for Junior Secondary School Students. Moreover, the EDB commissioned the Hong Kong Institute of Educational Research, Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) to produce for use by teachers the Hong Kong Test of Chinese Reading and Writing Abilities Assessment for Secondary School Students. In 2007, the EDB commissioned the Department of Psychology, University of Hong Kong to develop a checklist entitled 自閉症兒童課堂及社交適應評估量表 to facilitate schools in assessing students' learning needs for devising suitable education plans for them. The EDB also collaborated with the CUHK in developing a local norm for the Chinese version of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), and the Strengths and Weaknesses of Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD) - Symptoms and Normal-behaviour (SWAN), for identification of students with AD/HD. The EDB also jointly developed with relevant government departments (including the Department of Health (DH), Social Welfare Department (SWD), Hospital Authority (HA), Correctional Services Department), professional psychologists from local tertiary institutions and the Hong Kong Psychological Society to adapt the latest version of Wechsler IQ tests for intellectual assessment of children aged 6-16, Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children – Fourth Edition (Hong Kong), which was published in 2010, for use by professional psychologists in Hong Kong.

6. On approaches and strategies for implementing IE, the EDB invited in 2005 a renowned British scholar Dr Rea Reason to Hong Kong 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 the United Kingdom 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 strategies and model for supporting students with SpLD. Currently, the EDB is piloting the tiered intervention model for enhancing the support for students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD).

7. Furthermore, the EDB has been collaborating with tertiary institutions in developing strengthened support strategies for student with SEN as well as theory-driven and evidence-based teaching models and materials. 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 for students with SpLD, including implementing the Tiered Intervention Model in pilot schools to enhance the ability of ordinary students and students with SpLD in learning Chinese, developing resource packs for supporting primary and secondary students in Chinese reading and writing, and strengthening professional training for teachers. In recent years, the EDB has been collaborating with universities in researching into ways to improve the language ability of students with speech and language impairment, and developing training strategies and resources in relation to receptive and expressive Cantonese syntax for reference and use of speech therapists. Separately, the EDB formed a research team with two universities in the 2013/14 school year to study ways to enhance the higher order thinking of students with ASD in order to facilitate them in studying the Liberal Studies subject at senior secondary levels. Relevant teaching strategies and resources are being developed. Deliverables of the first phase of the study will be published by the end of the 2014/15 school year.

8. The EDB set up the Hong Kong Social Thinking Research Team with a university and an NGO in 2007 to localise the social thinking training curriculum (ILAUGH model) developed by Ms Michelle Winner, a renowned American scholar, for secondary students with impairments in social interaction and language development (including students with ASD). This set of training materials, applicable to local secondary students, was published and distributed to all secondary schools in Hong Kong in 2009. The Hong Kong Social Thinking Research Team, summing up the experience it gathered over the past few years in promoting ILAUGH and delivering training to school staff, has compiled supplementary information on ILAUGH and published the supplementary information in the 2013/14 school year. Moreover, the EDB contributed to the writing of two chapters of the teachers' manual on early psychosis (《賽馬會思覺健康計劃思覺健康專業手冊 (教師篇)》) which was published by the Jockey Club Early Psychosis Project, University of Hong Kong for schools' reference. The first chapter was on facilitating students with early psychosis in adapting to school life and the second chapter was on teaching and learning support for these students.

9. In recent years, the Quality Education Fund (QEF) has set Catering for Learners' Diversity as one of the priority themes to promote school-based innovative initiatives and co-operation between schools and tertiary institutions, with a view to enhancing the sector's capacity and the teaching and learning effectiveness. Funded by the QEF, the Hong Kong Institute of Education developed between 2003 and 2012 three teaching packages on Theory of Mind, which can be administered by social workers/student guidance staff and teachers for enhancing the social and emotional regulation skills of students with ASD. Through

financially supporting the QEF Thematic Network on Serving Students with Dyslexia (2006-2012), the QEF also encouraged schools and tertiary institution to work together and form school networks to share their teaching skills and school-based resources. Four teaching packages on learning strategies for reading and writing were published. The EDB staff have joined and offered professional views on all these projects.

10. To enhance teachers' professional capacity in catering for students with SEN, the EDB has commissioned tertiary institutions to offer structured training courses on supporting students with SEN pitched at Basic, Advanced and Thematic levels (BAT Courses) since the 2007/08 school year. Moreover, the EDB has been encouraging local teacher education institutions to include a core module on supporting students with SEN or catering for learners' diversity in their pre-service teacher training courses. We have learned that teacher education institutions have incorporated such module in their pre-service teacher training programmes to strengthen the knowledge and skills of the prospective teachers in this respect. Furthermore, to enhance the professional development of teachers, the EDB has organised various thematic training activities, such as seminars, workshops and sharing sessions, talks hosted by local and overseas experts, to keep teachers informed of the latest trend and strategies in catering for students with SEN.

11. The EDB seeks professional advice from experts in tertiary institutions from time to time with a view to further enhancing the support for students with SEN. For example, to ensure that the performance of hearing aids meets the needs of students with hearing impairment, audiologists from universities have been invited to offer professional advice on the hearing aids provided by the EDB. The EDB has also invited academics to provide expert advice on its language assessment tool - Cantonese (Hong Kong) Expressive Language Scales (Chinese version only) and resources packages (such as the Resource Package on Language Enhancement Strategies (Chinese version only)).

12. NGOs have built up their experience in supporting students with SEN over the years. Through various forms of collaboration with NGOs, the EDB has provided comprehensive support to students with SEN. For example, the EDB launched a pilot project on enhancement of support services for students with ASD in the 2011/12 school year to step up the support for students with ASD attending ordinary schools. As part of the project, NGOs were commissioned to provide three-year structured on-top group training for students with ASD in participating schools, with a view to facilitating their integration in schools in both their learning and social life.

13. The EDB and relevant NGOs jointly organise on a regular basis talks on Primary One Admission for parents of pre-school children with SEN who are suitable for admission to

ordinary schools to help them understand the support services provided for students with SEN by schools.

Collaboration with other government departments

14. Regarding the support for students with SEN and their parents, government departments all along have a clear division of responsibilities in their expert areas and would work together to ensure orderly service delivery within their respective professional ambit. The HA and DH are responsible for assessment and treatment for children with developmental disorders, as well as referring them for appropriate rehabilitation services. The SWD provides pre-school rehabilitation services for children with disabilities from birth to six years old, and renders support to families in need. The EDB provides early identification and appropriate learning support services for school age children with SEN. The Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) makes available special examination arrangements for students with SEN. Since the special education support services cut across different age groups and stakeholders, service needs can be most effectively met if individual services are provided by the relevant professional departments.

15. The DH, HA, EDB, SWD and NGOs have jointly launched the Comprehensive Child Development Service (CCDS) since July 2005. The CCDS provides teachers of pre-primary institutions with a convenient mechanism to refer pre-primary children with physical, developmental or behavioural problems to the Maternal and Child Health Centres for preliminary assessment. The DH, EDB and SWD jointly produced in 2008 the Pre-primary Children Development and Behaviour Management - Teacher Resource Kit, which was distributed to all pre-primary institutions in Hong Kong for teachers' reference. The DH also collaborates with the EDB to provide regular seminars and workshops for kindergarten teachers on related subjects. The EDB also invites, on a need basis, HA experts to provide training on designated professional areas for professionals in schools and teachers.

16. The Child Assessment Service (CAS) of the DH provides comprehensive multi-disciplinary assessment for children who are under 12 years of age with developmental disorders, and arranges rehabilitation services for them as necessary. The multi-disciplinary assessment team in the CAS consists of professionals in various disciplines who would collaborate to provide assessments and diagnosis for children with developmental disabilities as necessary and arrange rehabilitation services (including treatment by the multi-disciplinary team of the HA, rehabilitation training, and special educational support services in schools, etc.) for them as needed. To ensure students with mental derangement (MD) would receive appropriate support, the EDB has already reached a consensus with the seven district centres of the Early Assessment Service for Young People under the HA, in which schools could contact the respective district service centres direct to seek prompt expert advice, assessment

and support when needed. Concurrently, the EDB and HA jointly organise a number of regional thematic seminars and workshops on different MD (including psychosis and depression) for student guidance teachers/personnel. Psychiatrists, EPs and social workers are invited to share on the support for students with MD.

17. On the support for children diagnosed with persistent hearing impairment, the HA and EDB provide necessary support according to their respective expertise (i.e. healthcare and educational services). On the provision of hearing aids, the EDB provides free hearing aid fitting to needy children with hearing impairment, including audiological reassessment, fine-tuning, and making and repair of earmoulds, etc. The HA performs cochlear implant surgeries for clinical eligible children with severe to profound hearing impairment. Starting from April 2013, the HA has included the replacement of external speech processors of cochlear implants as one of the non-drug subvented items of the Samaritan Fund to provide financial assistance to patients in need.

Setting up School Support Networks and Strengthening Sectoral Collaboration

18. The EDB continues to foster exchanges and collaboration in the sector through various forms of activities and programmes, such as inviting special schools to serve as Special Schools cum Resource Centres to enhance ordinary schools' ability of caring for students with SEN through professional exchanges and networking. The EDB also invites schools with rich experience in IE to serve as Resource Schools on WSA and share their good practices with other schools.

19. In recent years, the EDB has made use of the school support network programmes in various districts to strengthen school-based applications through sharing of successful experiences and good practices. An example is the Tai Po district secondary schools support network programme that focuses on dealing with learners' diversity. The EDB also collaborates with the SWD, the Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Service, Department of Psychiatry of the Queen Mary Hospital and individual NGOs to carry out the district collaboration project. The theme of the project in the 2011/12 school year was enhancing teachers' understanding of the needs of students with AD/HD and the relevant support strategies, whereas the focus for the 2012/13 and 2013/14 school years was catering for students with ASD. In the 2014/15 school year, the EDB will continue to work with the bodies concerned to enhance teachers' knowledge and skills on supporting students with depression and self-harm behaviour through various means.

Establishment of Cross-departmental or Cross-sectoral Working Groups/Committees

20. The Government is aware of the importance of cross-sectoral collaboration. Under

the existing framework, different government departments will form different standing working groups/committees on issues that require cross-departmental collaboration, and representatives from other government departments and various sectors will be invited to participate on a need basis. For instance, the Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB) has established a cross-departmental and cross-sectoral Rehabilitation Advisory Committee (RAC) to advise on the development, implementation and funding of rehabilitation services, and coordinate the rehabilitation services of government departments and voluntary agencies to ensure that the existing resources are put to the best use. The RAC comprises the Commissioner for Rehabilitation and representatives from the EDB, DH, SWD, HA and various sectors.

21. As regards policies and measures on the implementation of IE, the EDB set up the Task Force on IE in Mainstream Schools in 2005, which comprises major stakeholders involved in the promotion of IE, namely representatives from primary, secondary and special school councils, associations of heads of primary and secondary schools, resource centres and resource schools, the Hong Kong Council of Social Service (HKCSS) and its nominated service agencies for the disabled, associations for parents of students with SEN; Committee on Home-School Cooperation, tertiary institutions, DH and SWD, etc. When necessary, the Task Force will invite representatives from other bodies, such as HA and HKEAA, to join its meetings to discuss relevant issues. Through regular meetings with the Task Force, the EDB has kept stakeholders informed of the latest progress of implementing IE and sought their views on improvement measures.

22. In May 2013, the Food and Health Bureau established the Review Committee on Mental Health to review the existing mental health services, with a view to promoting mental health and strengthening the support for people with mental health problems. The Review Committee is chaired by the Secretary for Food and Health, with a membership covering the EDB, LWB, SWD, health care professionals, service providers, Legislative Council members, academics, HKCSS, Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC), patients and their families. The Review Committee will review the existing policies on mental health, including the mental health services for children and the youth, so as to map out the future development of mental health services in Hong Kong.

23. In addition, the EDB holds meetings with the DH and HA every year to discuss issues related to assessment of students with SEN, school place arrangements, transition and support services. The EDB also maintains close connection with the HKEAA, including sending professionals to join the Committee on Special Needs Candidates and the Task Group on Special Examination Arrangements for Candidates with Specific Learning Disabilities formed under the Committee to render assistance in working out special examination arrangements for candidates with SEN, reviewing and improving the making of such

arrangements periodically, and scrutinising cases of application. Having regard to the views of this Subcommittee, we will strengthen our communication with the Task Force and our liaison with various departments to seek continuous improvements to the education and support services for students with SEN.

Home-school Cooperation and Public Education – All-front Cross-sectoral Collaboration

24. Effective implementation of IE and elimination of discrimination against people with disabilities require the support and collaboration of various sectors in the community. The EDB attaches great importance to publicity and information dissemination for enhancing public awareness of the IE concept and measures. We will keep stakeholders informed of the latest development in IE through different media and various forms of publicity activities, such as talks, workshops, exhibitions, television, etc. In recent years, the EDB has co-organised various kinds of promotional activities and competitions with different organisations. These include “An Inclusive School - It All Begins with Our Hearts” IE publicity drive, two video production and broadcasting contests jointly organised with the DH and the primary schools councils; a series of episodes about students with SEN co-produced with the DH and Radio Television Hong Kong; participation in the Learning and Teaching Expo organised by the HKEdCity to brief the education sector on the implementation of IE in ordinary schools; and the “Home-school Cooperation in Building an Inclusive School Culture” Award Scheme launched in secondary, primary and special schools together with the schools councils, EOC and Committee on Home-School Cooperation in the 2013/14 school year. All these efforts are conducive to enhancing public understanding and acceptance of students with SEN and facilitates the cultivation of an inclusive and harmonious society.

Way Forward

25. On the support for students with SEN and the implementation of IE, a standing cross-departmental and cross-sectoral mechanism to foster collaborative efforts has been in place. Where appropriate, the EDB will approach relevant government departments to explore and coordinate improvement measures as appropriate, with a view to enhancing services on a continuous basis and providing more targeted support for students with SEN.

Views Sought

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

Education Bureau
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