

For information on  
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**Panel on Education**  
**Subcommittee to Study the**  
**Implementation of Free Kindergarten Education**  
**Transition from Kindergarten to Primary School**

**Purpose**

This paper provides the present situation and the initial views of the Committee on Free Kindergarten Education (the Committee) on the transition from kindergarten (KG) to primary school.

**Background**

2. KG education is important in laying the foundation for life-long learning and whole person development. Moving from KG to primary school is an important step forward for children. They will experience a new curriculum with new modes of learning, face a new learning environment, and meet new teachers and classmates. Careful handling of the transition helps students with different background and learning needs to build up positive self-esteem and to remain motivated towards learning in school.

3. To address the issue of transition, the Education Commission put forward in its “Reform Proposal for the Education System in Hong Kong” in September 2000 recommendations to enhance the interface between KG and primary education. Among others, teacher training providers have reviewed the teacher training courses for teachers of early childhood and primary education so that they can have a better understanding of the preceding/ensuing stage of education in terms of the curriculum, the pedagogy and child psychology. Also, there is also an alignment of the minimum age of entering KG to 2 years 8 months in order to dovetail it with children’s entrance age to primary school when they reach 5 years and 8 months old. Besides, in 2001, the then Education Department

prepared a new set of “Guidelines on Helping Primary One Pupils Adapt to a New School Life” to provide primary schools with some basic concepts on the skills, knowledge and attitude required by children in smooth transition from pre-primary to primary schooling in collaboration with KGs and parents.

4. Under the “Basic Education Curriculum Guide - Building on Strengths” (Guide), which was developed to offer teachers and school heads a handy tool with the necessary know-how to realize the aims of education and curriculum development in the classroom, a series of 15 booklets have been produced. Interface at KG and Primary 1 (P1) constitutes one of the booklets, which suggests a comprehensive and co-operative approach for schools to help students adapt to the new environment when they move from KG to P1. A chapter is also devoted in the *Guide to the Pre-primary Curriculum* (2006)<sup>1</sup> to address the importance of smooth transition from KG to primary school. It encourages teachers of both levels to communicate well in advance. Parents who play an important role in the children’s development should also be well-prepared to support children in dealing with the difficulties that may arise in the new environment.

### **Present Situation**

5. Various measures have been taken by the KG and primary school sectors to enhance smooth transition of the students. For instance, KG and primary school teachers conduct mutual visits to have a better understanding of school life and curriculum in both settings. Simulated P1 classes were also organized by KGs towards the end of Upper KG (K3) to familiarize students with some basic routines of the primary school. Moreover, KGs will arrange sharing sessions for parents of K3 students where the alumni and their parents would share their experience in primary school, including what difficulties parents would face and how they tackle them. Many primary schools also offer on-site experiential days for their prospective P1 students to familiarize them with the new environment, teachers and classmates.

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<sup>1</sup> The “*Guide to the Pre-primary Curriculum*. (2006)” was prepared by the Curriculum Development Council (CDC) of Hong Kong for Pre-primary Institutions serving children aged from 2 to 6.

6. In the 2013/14 and 2014/15 school years, interface between KG and primary education has been one of the support foci of Education Bureau (EDB)'s on-site professional support for KGs. The service aims to enrich the teachers' understanding of the similarities and differences between the integrated curriculum in KGs and the primary school curriculum in respect of their organization of learning contents, timetabling, teaching modes and assessments with a view to strengthening the interface between the two adjacent learning stages. It empowers teachers not only in facilitating children's emotional and habitual preparation for their promotion to P1, but also their cognitive and developmental readiness to support future learning. It is expected that age-appropriate learning contents as well as teaching strategies are to be devised and implemented in KGs to lay a solid foundation for children to transit to primary schools in response to the recommendations of the *Guide to the Pre-primary Curriculum* (2006).

7. With a view to helping parents support their children in learning, EDB organizes seminars for parents with children of KG age every year and "Transition to Primary" has been one of the themes in the past few years. Besides, a series of leaflets/booklets have been developed for parents on helping children adapt to their new learning environment in primary schools.

### **Deliberations and Views of the Committee**

8. Various stakeholders and the Committee acknowledge that the interface between KG and primary education has room for enhancement. For example, parents consider that the curriculum and modes of learning in primary school are so different from those in KG that they are causing a great deal of pressure on their children. As a result, children may even develop negative attitude towards learning. KG teachers, at the same time, are often pressurized by parents and primary school teachers to introduce primary school curriculum in K3 so as to "better prepare" children for primary education. To help children adapt to the changes that they will face in entering primary schools, the Committee has discussed various strategies regarding transition under the dimensions of KG children, schools and families/communities and has the following initial views:

✧ *Ready Children*

9. The Committee considers it desirable for K3 teachers to make reference to the primary school curriculum in devising their learning activities. However, they should avoid teaching P1 curriculum at KG level in order to uphold the core values of KG education. In this connection, the Committee is of the view that the continuity of the KG and primary school curricula could be reviewed and enhanced. Specifically, some learning outcomes for KG graduates could be set to provide both KG and primary school teachers with some references of what the children are expected to know and do at the end of KG education. Teachers could then build upon children's earlier knowledge and achievement.

10. The Committee is of the view that in setting the learning outcomes for KG children, the following should be considered:

- There should be clear differentiation of expectations between the KG and P1 levels.
- The progression from KG to P1 level should be developmentally appropriate.
- The outcomes should emphasise the personal qualities of children (e.g. self-care skills, social skills, etc.) and be observable or measurable.
- The outcomes should not be too prescriptive to avoid drilling and unnecessary pressure on children.
- Children's individual differences should be respected.

11. The Committee is of the view that relevant parts of the *Guide to the Pre-primary Curriculum* (2006) should be updated accordingly. More specifically, there should be well differentiated expectations between the KG and P1 levels. Apart from setting clear but not prescriptive learning outcomes for KG graduates, there should also be more elaboration on the issue of transition with a view to guiding KG teachers in providing systematic support to children when they transit to

primary school.

✧ *Ready Schools*

12. The Committee is of the view that the existing good practices and measures to facilitate transition as mentioned in paragraphs 5 to 7 above should continue and be strengthened. To be specific, more sharing of good practices between the KG and primary school sectors, in the form of online videos or face-to-face meetings for example, should be encouraged. Appropriate transition arrangements should be in place at both KG and primary school levels so as to systematically support the children when they transit to P1. Primary schools could designate a teacher to coordinate the implementation of the transition arrangements.

13. Effective support measures and guidelines for KG and primary school teachers as well as training opportunities for teachers of both levels may also be reviewed and enhanced. Specifically, teacher education institutions might consider reviewing their pre-service teacher training programs in order to better prepare the prospective KG and primary school teachers in handling transition at both levels, e.g. arranging school attachment for KG teachers at primary schools and vice versa. Transfer of children's information from KG to primary school in general should also be enhanced.

✧ *Ready Families/Communities*

14. With regard to preparing families and communities for smooth transition, the Committee is of the view that more home-school collaboration at both KG and primary school levels is necessary to assist children in adapting to the new learning environment. For example, schools may contact parents by phone or conduct parent meetings/conferences at the beginning of the school year to share information and views on the transition arrangements. More emphasis should be put on parents' and caregivers' awareness and involvement in their children's early learning and development, as well as children's transition to primary schools. In this connection, parent education should be further enriched to equip parents with the necessary skills and knowledge to support their children in dealing with the psychological and emotional frustration that might emerge in the transition period. Parent

education could also focus on helping parents develop realistic and positive expectations of children transiting to P1.

### **Views Sought**

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

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