

**For discussion on  
1 December 2017**

**Legislative Council Panel on Education**

**Whole-day Primary Schooling, Homework Policy and  
School-based After-school Learning and Support Programmes**

**Purpose**

This paper briefs members on the implementation of whole-day primary schooling, school homework policy and School-based After-school Learning and Support Programmes.

**Whole-day Primary Schooling**

*Objective*

2. To provide an environment conducive to an all-round and balanced education for students, the Government has implemented progressively whole-day primary schooling since 1993. The 1997 Policy Address further announced the goal of whole-day schooling for all at primary level.

3. The purpose of whole-day primary schooling is to offer a favourable learning environment for students. In curriculum planning, the schools could implement a more flexible and balanced curriculum, while covering the core-curriculum, to provide students with diversified learning experiences, including programmes for promoting reading to learn, moral and civic education, national education, religious education, students' physical and aesthetic development, the use of information technology for interactive learning and cross-curricular learning. Under whole-day schooling, teachers may have greater flexibility to arrange more interactive and creative group activities, and apply diversified pedagogical practices and modes of assessment to promote learning and develop the potentials of students. Schools may also arrange tutorial sessions or remedial

teaching for students in need of academic support to let them complete all or part of their assignments under teachers' guidance so as to resolve their learning difficulties and enhance their learning capacities.

4. Moreover, the implementation of whole-day schooling at primary level helps relieve the pressure of a tight learning schedule, freeing up more time and opportunities (e.g. during lunch breaks and class teacher periods) for students to interact with their peers and teachers and foster a better understanding of each other. Schools may allocate extra time to assemblies, library periods, various extra-curricular activities and developmental guidance activities for students to achieve the goal of whole-person development.

### *Implementation*

5. As from the 2015/16 school year, about 99% of public sector and Direct Subsidy Scheme primary schools in Hong Kong have been operating in whole-day mode. There are about 470 whole-day primary schools in Hong Kong at present. In 2007, the Government conducted a thematic household survey on various education policies. In the survey, public views on whole-day primary schools, among others, were gauged. The findings showed that whole-day primary schooling was widely recognised by the community. Over 80% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed to the statement that "A more cordial learning environment could be achieved in whole-day primary schools since students had more time to talk to teachers, principal and other students". Respondents also found that whole-day primary schooling "allowed more teacher-student interaction in the classroom and thus students could participate more actively in discussion activities" and "allowed more extra-curricular activities to be organized for students".

6. To dovetail with the direction of school-based management, whole-day primary schools should seek continuous self-improvement through the School Self-evaluation with a view to sustaining the development and providing quality education. In addition, the Education Bureau (EDB) understands, through regular school visits, external school reviews, inspections and communication with school councils, that stakeholders in the education sector recognize the merits of whole-day primary schooling in such aspects as school administration, curriculum development, student guidance, extra-curricular activities and student behaviors, etc. in creating a better learning environment.

7. Concluded from all available information, whole-day schools at present can generally make good use of their favorable conditions, with a view to providing students with a balanced curriculum, taking care of the learning needs of students of different abilities and arranging quality learning activities, including:

- (i) making use of more class time allowed to enhance civic and moral education, organize whole-school activities or introduce enrichment topics to some subjects for promoting whole-person development of students;
- (ii) fostering closer ties between students and teachers, and enhancing students' sense of belonging to school. Most schools make good use of class teacher periods to understand student needs and to devise strategies for supporting student growth;
- (iii) providing tutorial sessions or homework guidance periods to give students extra individual guidance or to allow them to complete part of their assignments at school with the view to helping them solve their problems in learning and catering for learners' diversity;
- (iv) making use of more time allowed to organize a diversified range of co-curricular activities, including school-based activities and activities run by outside organizations, in order to enrich the learning experience of students.

8. In sum, since its implementation, whole-day primary schooling has received general recognition and support from the community, particularly among schools and parents. Schools have also made effective use of the favourable conditions created under whole-day schooling through making various arrangements in relation to their own school-based situation in the endeavor to foster an all-round and balanced development in the learning and growth of students.

## **School Homework Policy**

9. Homework, which comes in different forms outside lesson time, enables students to consolidate their learning in class, stimulate thinking, enhance their understanding of lesson topics and construct knowledge. Meaningful homework can cultivate students' interest in learning, encourage proactive self-motivated learning and exploration of daily life problems as well as extend their learning. Throughout the years, the EDB has emphasised that it is the quality rather than the quantity of homework that matters. Teachers should have specific objectives and expected learning outcomes in mind when designing homework. Diversified types of homework are to be provided based on the abilities, learning needs and interests of their students so as to help them consolidate their knowledge, apply what they have learned or develop self-learning capability. Homework is by no means equivalent to supplementary exercises, rote learning, excessive mechanical copying or drilling.

10. In the updated “Basic Education Curriculum Guide – To Sustain, Deepen and Focus on Learning to Learn (Primary 1-6)” (the Guide) published in 2014, the EDB reiterated that schools should attach great importance to the whole-person development of their students. Schools should ensure that their students have sufficient time for rests and leisure time to participate in other beneficial social or extra-curricular activities, such as reading, doing physical exercises or playing, pursuing their interests and establishing good relationship with family members, peers and friends, and developing a healthy lifestyle. In Chapter 8 “Meaningful Homework” of the Guide, it sets out a set of guiding principles and suggested measures for formulating and implementing a school-based homework policy. Schools are continually advised to strike a balance between the quality and quantity of homework. Schools are reminded to take into account students' needs to engage in other activities after school when setting the types and amount of homework for different classes and class levels of students.

11. Given the diverse learning needs and abilities of students, it is definitely unprofessional to set a daily maximum amount of homework load on an across-the-board basis. Such an arrangement is not beneficial as it can neither cater for the needs of less able students nor develop the potential of gifted students. The EDB sets out guidelines clearly that schools should formulate an appropriate school-based homework policy in the light of learning

diversity of the students. Schools should coordinate the efforts of different subject teachers to review regularly the frequency, quantity, type and quality of homework as well as take into consideration parents' views to ensure that all homework assignments are appropriately set and meaningfully designed to meet the abilities and interests of students. In addition, the setting of a homework policy should allow students sufficient time for rests, enjoying the company of family members, playing games or doing physical exercises, pursuing personal interests, and developing a healthy lifestyle. Based on our understanding, many schools have adopted diversified forms of homework and reduced the amount of written assignments; coordinated the daily homework load of different class levels; and adjusted the homework policy by taking into account the views of parents collected through questionnaire surveys.

12. Based on the findings of the questionnaire surveys commissioned by the EDB in 2015 and 2016 with about 7 000 parents from nearly 100 primary schools participating, the time spent daily on homework by students varies significantly (from less than 0.5 hours to over 3 hours) even under similar homework arrangements for students of the same grade in the same school. This indicates that homework load is not the only, if not major, factor in determining the time spent by students on homework. The factors behind whether a student would feel that there is pressure from homework are even more complicated. If one concludes that there are faults in education policies and systems merely because individual schools give undue weight to students' academic results or fail to develop proper assessment or homework policies, or a small number of students feel pressure from homework and assessments, it is oversimplifying the issue and mistaking learner differences, views of individual schools on teaching with system level problems.

13. To effectively support students in learning, schools and parents have to work together to foster a close home-school partnership. At present, many schools have informed parents of their policies on homework and tests and examinations in a timely manner. Some schools have even uploaded such information onto their websites to inform parents of the specific requirements of these policies, so that parents may provide necessary support at home. To further enhance the homework policy, the EDB encourages schools to strengthen their communication with parents, and to listen to and consider their views in an open and transparent manner. On the other hand, parents may also take the initiative to approach schools to learn more about their children's

learning progress. If their children have problems with or feel stressed about their homework, parents should discuss with the teachers to find a solution as early as possible.

### **School-based After-school Learning and Support Programmes**

14. One of our major educational goals has always been the provision of diversified school education for the balanced whole-person development and healthy growth of students. For disadvantaged children, we would like to offer them an opportunity for all-round development when they are growing up through additional assistance. The EDB has implemented the School-based After-school Learning and Support Programmes (Programme) since the 2005/06 school year for providing public sector schools (including special schools) as well as schools under the Direct Subsidy Scheme and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) with the School-based Grant (SBG) and Community-based Project (CBP) Grant respectively to organise school-based and community-based after-school activities. The target students of the Programme are those Primary 1 to Secondary 6 students from families in receipt of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) or full grant under the Student Financial Assistance Scheme (SFAS). The objective of the Programme is to provide more support and opportunities for needy students to facilitate their whole-person development and personal growth. This is achieved through a wide range of after-school activities which can increase their learning effectiveness, broaden their learning experiences outside the classroom, and strengthen their understanding of the society and sense of belonging.

15. To support students for all-round development, a wide range of activities are organized under the Programme, including tutorial service, learning skills training, language training, art and cultural activities, sports activities, visits, voluntary work, development of self-confidence, social skills training, leadership training and adventure activities, etc., aiming at giving students a variety of learning experiences and enhancing their understanding of the society. Besides, to benefit those students who are not receiving CSSA or full grant of SFAS but identified by schools as needy and requiring extra care and support, schools are given discretionary quota. Such quota has been increased from 10% to 25% starting from the 2014/15 school year to help more needy students. In tandem, to encourage schools to make good use of funding, we provide an incentive funding. The annual subsidy rate of each eligible

student has increased from \$400 to \$600 and the 25 % of additional SBG funding from discretionary quota is calculated at the rate of \$600 per eligible student to the schools that have a utilization rate of 80% or above of the provision under the SBG in the previous year. Since the implementation of the Programme, the total annual provision has been increased from \$75 million to about \$240 million. In the 2017/18 school year, the annual provision of the SBG and CBP is about \$117 million and \$123 million respectively. Over 90% of schools (902 schools with about 200 000 eligible students in total) have organised SBG programmes and a total of 508 CBP projects have been organised by about 170 NGOs (with about 100 000 eligible students), of which 446 are collaboration projects with schools.

16. Assessment of the effectiveness of the Programme is done annually at two levels. In line with the spirit of school-based management, the Incorporated Management Committee / School Management Committee of the school in receipt of the SBG is accountable for proper use of the grant for its intended objectives and for review of the effectiveness of the Programme. To enhance transparency, schools are required to include the Programme in their School Annual Plan and conduct an annual review of the effectiveness of the Programme with the findings included in the School Report. NGOs are required to submit an evaluation report on the effectiveness of the projects organised to EDB. In addition, EDB collects feedback from stakeholders (including schools, NGOs, parents and students) through surveys and conducts supervisory visits to examine the implementation of the Programme. Since the implementation of the Programme, stakeholders in general agree that the Programme is effective and has achieved the goal. Schools are generally positive about collaborating with NGOs for achieving synergy. The overall satisfactory rate of various activities under the Programme is 90%. We will continue to review the effectiveness of the Programme in order to cater for the needs of the disadvantaged children for all-round development.

17. The provision of the Programme is complementary in nature. Apart from the Programme, the Government has launched various funding schemes to support schools and NGOs to organise after-school activities to cater for the diverse needs of students (e.g. The After-school Care Programme under the Social Welfare Department, the Child Development Fund under the Labour and Welfare Bureau, etc). EDB encourages schools to deploy and consolidate flexibly the various grants (including Expanded Operating Expenses Block

Grant (EOEBG) for schools, charitable trust funds and similar support provided by other organisations (e.g. The Hong Kong Jockey Club Life-wide Learning Fund)) and to collaborate with NGOs for organising activities not covered by the SBG to address the different needs of students. NGOs can also make use of community resources for rendering support services needed by different students. We hope that through synergy, the aforementioned support services are sustainable.

### **Concluding Remark**

18. The EDB attaches great importance to quality education for the balanced and healthy development of students. The implementation of whole-day primary schooling has created favourable conditions for schools to fully enhance their quality of education. The EDB will continue to provide schools with resources and support, and maintain communication with stakeholders to listen to their views in order to achieve the objective of whole-day primary schooling of providing all-round and balanced education for students. In addition, the EDB is committed to promoting an assessment (including homework) policy that enhances students' learning effectiveness. We will continue to convey messages on the principles and policy in designing meaningful homework and disseminate good practices through various channels, such as circulars, curriculum guides and professional training programmes for teachers. We will also conduct school visits, focus inspections and external school reviews to understand the school-based implementation situations and provide feedback to schools for their self-improvement.

**Education Bureau**  
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