

For discussion on
2 February 2018

Legislative Council Panel on Education
Promotion of Reading

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the measures undertaken by the Education Bureau (EDB) to promote and support reading in schools.

Reading as a Pleasurable Activity

2. Reading is a pleasurable educational activity and the foundation of lifelong learning. A good book stretches the readers' imagination or stimulates their curiosity in learning more about the world around them. At the same time, activities stemming from reading, such as story-telling, acting, sharing after thoughts, following descriptions/ instructions from a book to produce something or perform an action, naturally connect readers to other people and the real world for further application and enjoyment.

Place of Reading in the Curriculum

3 "Reading to Learn", which embraces the reading of both fiction and non-fiction material, has been adopted as one of the Four Key Tasks in the curriculum reform since 2001 to enhance students' capacity for lifelong learning

and whole-person development. In 2017, “Reading to Learn” has been extended to “Reading across the Curriculum” and “Language across the Curriculum” in the updated *Secondary Education Curriculum Guide* (2017), which means motivating students to read a wide range of materials of different themes and text types to broaden their knowledge base and enhance their reading skills, so that students can see reading as a key to link up learning in other subject areas, including Values Education.

4. In the context of language learning, both the Chinese Language and English Language curricula attach great importance to reading. More specifically, in implementing the Chinese Language curriculum, the EDB encourages and advises schools on appropriate strategies to maximise opportunities for students to develop their interest, broaden their reading scope, enhance their reading quality and promote deep reading. In implementing the English Language curriculum, the EDB also advises schools to give due attention to reading. At the primary level, it is suggested that around 40% of the lesson time should be devoted to Reading Workshops, where activities such as shared reading and storytelling can be conducted to establish a solid base for learning a second language. At the secondary level, special emphasis is placed on the promotion of “Reading across the Curriculum” through project or enquiry-based learning in other subjects in accordance with the school’s chosen medium of instruction.

5. For pre-school children, the *Kindergarten Education Curriculum Guide* (2017) highlights the value and pleasure of reading in early childhood as essential to the development of a lifelong reading habit and suggests making use of big books and picture books to nurture in children a love for reading real books and

develop their book concepts from early childhood. It also places emphasis on helping children to make use of picture/visual clues to make predictions, invite imagination and stretch their affective associations through engaging children in dialogues. The EDB regularly organises training programmes on story-telling and shared reading for teachers, and will collaborate with the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) in organising workshops for parents/grand-parents on strategies for enhancing children's interaction with adults for their all-round language development through reading and related activities.

Achievements in Reading

6. Over the years, schools have been implementing their school-based reading schemes/programmes, with a considerable measure of success¹. With concerted efforts from schools, there has been improvement in Hong Kong students' reading performance, which is evident in international assessments such as the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) for Primary 4 students and Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) for students aged 15².

7. While the data from PIRLS and PISA indicate students' good reading performance, they also suggest that there is still room for improvement in students' motivation and engagement in reading. Hence, the EDB and schools have to devise effective strategies and take stepped-up measures to increase students'

¹ To cultivate students' reading interest and habit, schools have adopted diversified measures such as morning reading session, reading corner, floating library, reading award scheme, Reading Ambassadors and Reading Day.

² Hong Kong progressed from the 14th place in 2001 to the first place in 2011 and the third place in 2017 in PIRLS and from the 10th place in 2003 to the second place in 2015 in PISA.

interest in reading and enhance their motivation to read. These strategies and measures are detailed in paragraph 20.

Measures to Promote and Support Reading

8. All along, the EDB has adopted a multi-pronged approach to promote and support reading in schools. Such measures include offering professional development programmes (PDP) for school leaders, teachers and school-librarians in developing and sustaining a reading culture; providing school-based support and organising reading-related activities in enriching the reading atmosphere and resources provision in facilitating the effective implementation of reading in schools.

Professional Development for Teachers and Teacher-librarians

9. To support schools to chart their reading programmes in the direction laid down in the curriculum documents, the EDB has been providing a variety of PDP and experience-sharing sessions to enhance teachers' related knowledge and skills. The focuses of these programmes range from the development of reading skills and strategies to the creation of a reading atmosphere in schools.

10. Teacher-librarians also play an important role in the promotion of reading. The EDB has provided ongoing training for teacher-librarians to enable them to play a more effective role in the promotion of reading, such as implementing school-based reading schemes/library programmes that support learning within and across subject curricula and develop students' knowledge and skills in using information appropriately, effectively and ethically.

School-based Support Services

11. School-based support has been rendered to kindergartens, primary and secondary schools to help them implement the reading-related initiatives recommended in the curricula of the respective stages of education. Since the 2014/15 school year, the EDB has provided on-site professional support services to about 140 kindergartens with focus on facilitating the language learning of young children, including that of non-Chinese speaking children. It was observed that a more inviting language learning environment was created and teachers' repertoire of strategies in developing children's reading interest and skills and engaging them in reading activities was widened. They were also able to help the children form reading habits both in school and at home by involving parents.

12. At the primary and secondary levels, the EDB has offered on-site support to an average of about 260 primary and secondary schools yearly. Emphasis has been put on helping students to move from "Learning to Read" to "Reading to Learn". Changes have been observed at both curriculum and classroom levels. "Reading across the curriculum" has been increasingly promoted at senior primary and secondary levels. Reading skills and strategies were taught in class and there has been an increasing use of multimodal texts³ that students encounter in their everyday experiences. To extend students' learning beyond the classroom, extensive reading materials or online reading tasks were assigned to develop their self-directed learning capabilities.

³ Multimodal texts are texts that communicate meaning through a combination of different modes, including linguistic, visual, audio, gestural and spatial.

Reading-related Activities

13. Over the years, the EDB has initiated various reading-related activities, e.g. Reading Fair, and since 2015 to create a city-wide hub for the love of reading, the EDB also has, in collaboration with SCOLAR, organised the World Book Day Fest, which replaces Reading Fair to engage a wider audience. The Fest features a wide variety of activities, such as storytelling sessions for children, expert talks and experience-sharing sessions, forums and book exhibitions. The Fest, which takes place in April to echo the World Book Day on 23 April, provides a convenient platform for professional interflow among key stakeholders, helps build a reading culture and creates resonance in the community. Building on the success in the past years, the Fest of 2018 will once again showcase a range of well-received signature activities for different age groups, including a “Reading Marathon” for primary schools, inspirational reading-themed game booths run by secondary schools and “Story Parties” for young children.

14. As a further measure to enhance students’ interest in reading, territory-wide contests such as puppetry and digital storytelling competitions in English are organised or co-organised by the EDB. A series of programmes and competitions are also organised by SCOLAR in and beyond classrooms under “Promotion of Chinese”, “Promotion of Putonghua”, “English Alliance 2017/18” and “Sponsorship Projects 2017/18”. These competitions and programmes provide platforms for professional development and networking for participating teachers and valuable opportunities for students to read and share, as well as learn and realise their potential.

15. The EDB also collaborates with the LCSD in running the project “English Storytelling for Children”, in which native-speaking English teachers (NETs) conduct storytelling sessions for children in public libraries to promote reading on weekends. Parents are encouraged to accompany their children to participate in the sessions, thus creating a good opportunity for parent-child reading and enhancing family literacy. Besides, the EDB and the LCSD also jointly implement the “Library Cards for All School Children Scheme”, which encourages students to make full use of the services provided by the public libraries, such as e-book databases.

Resources

16. To strengthen students’ reading abilities and support reading in schools, the EDB has produced a variety of reading-related resources for teachers’ and school-librarians’ use. Examples include resource packages, booklists and story books. With the increasing use of information technology in education, the EDB has also developed e-books, apps and websites with interactive features to further arouse students’ interest in reading and encourage them to read at their own pace, anytime and anywhere. (Please see Appendix for examples of e-resources on reading.)

17. The Hong Kong Education City (HKEdCity) has provided a number of reading services and programmes to promote online reading. To facilitate schools in promoting reading using information technology with minimal administrative work, schools can subscribe to e-books in the EdBookShelf, which currently offers about 1,200 free and paid e-books, through different packages for their students

according to their school-based needs. To help students review their reading journey and encourage them to develop a reading habit, an award scheme “Reading Contract” is also put in place. Besides, the HKEdCity has been organising an annual event “Top Ten Book Picks” to promote a reading culture among schools.

18. The Chinese and English Extensive Reading Schemes were implemented in schools from 1997/98 to 2016/17. The Schemes, aided in its start-up by the Chinese Extensive Reading Scheme Grant and English Extensive Reading Scheme Grant (the Reading Grants), have been successful in rooting reading in schools which are now in general implementing different forms of school-based reading strategies/programmes, including online reading. The promotion of reading has now been extended to include different subjects. As schools are provided with sufficient resources to purchase reading materials, the EDB ceased the disbursement of the Reading Grants. Sources of funding which schools may draw on to purchase reading materials include:

- the Operating Expenses Block Grant / Expanded Operating Expenses Block Grant, which schools may use for almost any purpose related to the operation of the school. A large percentage of aided schools maintains a handsome surplus of either Grant;
- the School and Class Grant;
- the Consolidated Subject Grant; and
- the Composite Information Technology Grant.

Schools can also apply for the Language Fund and the Quality Education Fund (QEF) to support the implementation of the initiatives on promotion of reading in schools. For individual schools that experience resource difficulties in purchasing reading materials, they are welcome to contact the EDB for advice.

Way forward

19. We believe that any single factor alone cannot contribute to the effective implementation of reading in schools. The key to success includes a clear direction, a shared goal, teachers' expertise and knowledge, schools' holistic planning, community support and awareness of the value of reading as well as resources available.

20. To further strengthen students' interest in reading and their motivation to read, we will step up measures to facilitate schools in drawing up a holistic plan which will go beyond mere budgeting for procurement of reading materials to include complementary reading activities. The EDB will work in close partnership with the key stakeholder groups (e.g. LCSD, parents and schools, publishers and book writers) to organise reading activities in enhancing the impact on reading and to cultivate a reading culture in schools. A basket of measures and activities will soon be implemented to nurture in children a reading habit starting from early childhood and enhance students' motivation to read, examples of which are as follows:

- Collaborating with the LCSD public libraries to supply books to kindergartens via block loans,
- Contributing to the bimonthly LCSD newsletter in respect of promoting reading through the use of the resources in the public libraries,
- Training on reading/storytelling techniques and strategies for teachers and parents/grandparents, and on the effective use of block loans and books from public libraries for teachers,
- Organising theme-based reading with related activities such as book display and book sharing on social media for primary and secondary schools,

- Inviting celebrities to share reading experience and recommend books on e-platform and social media,
- Organising the 2018 World Book Day Fest, and
- Mass signing of a Reading Charter on the 2018 World Book Day Fest

Education Bureau

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e-Resources on Reading

1. The EDB has developed a website called “Book Works”, which features interactive games and animations to facilitate teacher-librarians to develop students’ library and research skills.
2. To promote e-reading, the EDB has also implemented “Space Town”, a programme which includes fun learning activities, home reading programmes, story books and an e-book app, to help emergent readers develop a love of reading and a good foundation for English learning.