

LegCo Panel on Education

Support for Schools with A Large Intake of Students of Low Academic Ability

Purpose

The purpose of this note is to give Members a more comprehensive overview of the various kinds of support for schools with a large intake of students of lower academic ability. It supplements the information note submitted in April 2001 to Members on the same subject. (Copy attached).

Existing Measures

2. The existing support measures for schools with a large intake of academically low achievers (ALAs) are:

- School-Based Remedial Support Programme – additional teachers and a recurrent grant for intensive remedial teaching for junior secondary school students in the major subjects and development of learning skills
- School-based Curriculum Tailoring Scheme – an additional teacher for developing school-based curricula to meet the needs of ALAs
- Additional clerical support – providing for additional clerical services to relieve teachers of non-teaching workload
- Intensive Remedial Teaching Programme – additional teachers and a recurrent grant for remedial support for primary school pupils weak in the major subjects
- Professional support services – e.g. the school-based curriculum sections provide on-site professional advice to primary and secondary schools
- Capacity Enhancement Grant to relieve teachers' workload

- Sample learning tasks in the major subjects for teachers' reference and use
- On-line training courses for teachers on mixed-ability teaching and student diversity
- Regional Education Offices promoting best practices and networking district resources to support schools

3. In parallel with these measures, a number of research projects are being conducted on individual differences, student motivation and effectiveness of various modes of learning. The findings from these projects will cast light on how we could help schools to meet the diverse needs of students.

4. The Hong Kong Education City website is building up a broad range of on-line resources on using IT in teaching and learning. The potential for more on-line access to encourage self-learning by students is continually being explored.

Further Support

5. To enhance teachers' capacity to help ALAs in secondary schools, the Education Department (ED) will conduct a series of seminars and workshops for school heads and teachers during the months of May to July this year. Aimed at building up awareness of the wide range of resources and support services available through ED and the wider community, these sessions will enhance schools' capacity to help ALAs in the new school year beginning September 2001.

6. As early identification of student needs is crucial to the success of remedial support, the Government has undertaken to implement the Understanding the Adolescent Project (UAP) in secondary schools as from the 2001/02 school year. Building on the six-year pilot of UAP, the Social Welfare Department is now inviting non-governmental organisations providing school social services to apply in collaboration with schools for the UAP, which would ultimately target intensive support for up to 200 schools. Essentially, the project enables early identification of developmental needs of youth and timely intervention through preventive programmes. Based on research findings, the joint efforts of parents, teachers and students themselves, marked

improvements are likely in such areas as problem-solving, goal-setting, emotional management and outlook for life.

7. In consideration of such findings, the Government has now decided to extend the UAP to primary schools. Over a three-year period, the comprehensive screening tool and primary preventive programmes will be piloted to meet the developmental needs of upper primary pupils and to build up their resilience in coping with future life challenges. With an initial annual budget of \$10m rising to \$50m, it is expected that pupils in 400 primary schools will benefit.

8. On a wider scale, we are also encouraging parents to take a more active part in their children's education. Through strengthening parental participation in educational affairs and home-school cooperation, we hope that many learning and behavioural problems in children could be prevented. A steering committee, led by the Director of Education, was set up in December 2000 to devise an overall strategy to encourage the widest participation of the community in parent education and a non-recurrent expenditure of \$50m have been set aside from 2001/02 to 2003/04 for the activities in this area.

9. Disciplinary problems usually go with learning problems. Together they affect the normal school operation and result in considerable workload for teachers. In order to build up positive attitudes in students through diverse and interesting learning experiences under the guidance of upright role models, the Government has set aside \$50m to expand the activities of uniform groups from 2001/02 to 2004/05. With the establishment of the steering committee, led by the Director of Education, in December 2000, work has been progressing satisfactorily, with all the local uniform stakeholders showing overwhelming support in expanding school-based uniform groups.

10. In extreme cases, disciplinary problems of unmotivated students could disrupt classes and school activities. In recognition of schools' needs, an additional recurrent amount of \$10m has been approved to establish 33 School Liaison Officer (SLOs) posts in the Hong Kong Police Force. These 33 SLOs will be posted to Police School Liaison Teams of the 18 Police districts. Working in partnership with school management, parent-teacher associations and NGOs, these teams will strengthen support to students at risk.

11. On the question of youth at risk, the Committee on Services for Youth At Risk chaired by the Director of Social Welfare will continue to monitor the needs of such youths and devise measures to help them.

Way Forward

12. The difficulties faced by academically low achieving students are quite diverse. In fact, a sub-committee on Catering for Students' Diverse Learning Needs was set up by the Board of Education (BoE) in September 2000 to map out an overall strategy to enable schools to implement measures meeting students' needs. The sub-committee is actively deliberating the issues before making any recommendations. ED will work closely with this sub-committee on the overall support strategy for students' diverse ability.

13. In supporting schools with a large intake of ALAs, ED will join hands with schools and coordinate the various measures implemented by other Government departments.

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

Education Department
May 2001

Information Note

Support for Schools with a Large Intake of Students of Lower Academic Ability

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to provide information on the additional resources and professional support currently provided by the Education Department (ED) to schools with a large intake of students of lower academic ability, as requested by Members at a previous LegCo Panel on Education meeting.

Support for schools with a large intake of students of lower academic ability

2. At present, additional resources and professional support are being provided to schools with a large intake of students of lower academic ability under the School-based Remedial Support Programmes, the School-based Curriculum Tailoring Scheme and the Intensive Remedial Teaching Programme. Additional clerical support and various types of professional support are also provided to these schools to help them cater for the needs of academically low achievers. Besides, intensive remedial teaching service is also provided by resource teaching centres.

School-based Remedial Support Programme

3. Under the School-based Remedial Support Programme (SBRSP), secondary schools which admit students in the bottom decile receive, according to a stipulated calculation formula, additional teachers and a recurrent grant to conduct supportive programmes for students in need. These programmes include intensive remedial teaching in the three major subjects of Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics as well as supportive measures for the development of learning skills.

School-based Curriculum Tailoring Scheme

4. Schools admitting two or more classes of academically low achievers (ALAs) at Secondary 1 level are invited to join the School-based Curriculum Tailoring Scheme. Each school joining the Scheme is provided with an additional teacher for developing school-based curricula for the ALAs.

Additional clerical support

5. Since September 1996, schools admitting one or more classes of ALAs at Secondary 1 level have been provided with funds for the provision of additional clerical service, thus relieving teachers of some of the non-teaching duties.

Intensive Remedial Teaching Programme

6. Under the Intensive Remedial Teaching Programme (IRTP), participating primary schools are provided with additional teachers and a recurrent grant to enhance remedial support for pupils who are weak in the three major subjects of Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics.

Professional support services

7. Professional support services are being provided by ED to schools in need. For instance, a central curriculum development support team has been set up since 1993 to provide on-site professional advice and learning facilitation measures for secondary schools with a large intake of Band 3-5 students. Training workshops and experience sharing seminars have also been organised for teachers teaching ALAs. For those academically weak students who are studying in primary schools not participating in the IRTP or in junior secondary schools not participating in the SBRSP, they may receive intensive remedial teaching service in the resource teaching centres operated by the ED.

Support for all schools

8. Apart from the support services offered specifically to schools with a large intake of students of lower academic ability, ED has been providing assistance to all schools in catering for the diverse learning needs of students. Some of the existing measures include:

- Providing Capacity Enhancement Grant to schools to relieve teachers' workload so that teachers can focus more on curriculum development and on catering for the diverse learning needs of students;
- Distributing sample learning tasks of Chinese language, English language and Mathematics subjects to primary schools. For wider dissemination, exemplars of school-based curriculum projects and teaching and learning resources for both primary and secondary schools are put up on the internet for teachers' reference;
- To help schools identify pupils with serious learning difficulties, an Observation Checklist is prepared for teachers teaching P1 pupils so that assistance can be provided to the needy pupils;
- Schools can also make use of the Hong Kong Attainment Test to assess pupils' achievement in Chinese, English and Mathematics at all levels from P1 to S3. In addition, the tests provide useful reference for diagnosing pupils' areas of strengths and weaknesses, identifying pupils for remedial treatment and monitoring the standards of pupils across years;
- Apart from arranging training courses on mixed ability teaching, on-line courses and self-learning packages are being developed for teachers to help them address the issue of student diversity;

- Officers of the Regional Education Offices provide different kinds of school-based support services to schools and promote best practices among schools through the building up of district networking; and
- To facilitate exchange of experiences among teachers, district teacher networks have been established since March 2000. The Hong Kong Education City website launched in August 2000 also serves as a collaborating platform for schools, institutions and education practitioners to exchange information on education resources, software and services.

Education Department
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