

For information  
On 11 March 2013

**Legislative Council Panel on Education**  
**Student Guidance Service in Primary Schools**

**Purpose**

This paper aims to brief Members on the background and development of the Comprehensive Student Guidance Service (CSGS), and report on the enhancement of student guidance service in primary schools.

**Background**

2. Similar to its development in most countries and regions, student guidance service in Hong Kong began in the form of counselling for individual students with behavioural problems. As early as 1978, student guidance officers from the former Education Department provided individual or group counselling to students in need in primary schools, which was primarily remedial in nature. Since 1992, the former Education Department has adopted the recommendations of the Education Commission Report No. 4, which recognised the importance of preventive guidance work and participation of all teaching staff, and thus implemented the Whole School Approach to guidance in primary schools. Student Guidance Teacher posts were created to provide school-based guidance service in aided primary schools. From then on, student guidance service has become more and more school-based in nature.

**Rationale and development of Comprehensive Student Guidance Service**

3. To tie in with the education reform in the 21st century, the Administration increased significantly the resources of student guidance service for primary schools as from the 2002/03 school year and broadened its manpower category in response to the demand of service. Since then, schools may appoint guidance teachers or hire social work services in accordance with their needs to support the personal growth of student. At the same time, we drew reference from the guidance and discipline model of the United States of America (USA) and introduced the concept of CSGS, moving towards the development of a counselling system in schools.

4. The existing CSGS attaches importance to establishing a counselling system to provide structured and holistic guidance service to meet the developmental needs of all students. Through effective integration and planning, schools may integrate student

guidance service with other systems in the school context (e.g. administration and management, learning and teaching, parent education, etc.) to develop a comprehensive student guidance system that covers remedial, preventive and developmental guidance services. It also ties in with the education and curriculum reforms in Hong Kong and fosters students' all-round development. This model has played an effective role in enhancing the development and popularization of a school-based, curriculum-driven, structured and professional guidance service in Hong Kong, which is also in pace with the global trend.

5. At present, all primary schools have established their student guidance teams to plan and oversee related services. Schools have adopted the Whole School Approach in implementing student guidance service. Instead of relying on individual professionals, all teachers will work in collaboration with student guidance personnel and school-based educational psychologists to nurture students' development at school, grade, class and individual levels. This approach helps the establishment of robust student guidance system for sustainable service, while minimising the impact arising from turnover of individual teaching staff or student guidance personnel.

6. At the policy level, the Education Bureau (EDB) enhances the CSGC to meet student needs through providing resources, drawing up guidelines, developing learning and teaching resources, monitoring student guidance service, offering teacher training, implementing diversified guidance support programmes and providing professional support.

### **Enhancement measures**

7. Since the introduction of the CSGS, we have put the development of student guidance service and its needs in primary schools under regular review. In recent years, enhancements have been made to the CSGS in primary schools in the followings areas: increasing progressively resources for student guidance service and allowing more flexibility in deployment, updating guidelines, strengthening the counselling roles of stakeholders, enhancing teacher training and exchange programmes, incorporating new elements into guidance support programmes and providing professional support continuously. Major enhancement measures are set out in the ensuing paragraphs.

#### **Increasing resources and flexibility**

8. In tandem with the launch of the CSGS in primary schools across the territory in the 2002/03 school year, an additional mode of resources allocation was offered so that resources for student guidance service would be made available to schools in the form of either student guidance personnel (Student Guidance Officers/Teachers) or Student Guidance Service (SGS) Grant. Primary schools which opted for the SGS Grant may deploy the Grant flexibly either

for employing student guidance personnel or procuring student guidance service from non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Student guidance personnel can be teachers with qualifications and experience in guidance or social workers. This arrangement can enhance the flexibility of resources deployment and cater for school circumstances and students' needs.

9. In terms of the manning ratio of student guidance personnel, the situation has been improved significantly since the 2002/03 school year, with the ratio raised from one student guidance personnel serving 1 680 students to one student guidance personnel serving about 800 students in each 24-class primary school or an equivalent amount of the SGS Grant. From the 2006/07 school year onwards, the ratio was further improved by extending this arrangement to each 18-class primary schools with about 600 students. With the full implementation of small class teaching by the 2014/15 school year, each primary school with about 450 students will be provided with one student guidance personnel or an equivalent amount of the SGS Grant. For primary schools with 5 to 17 classes, they are provided with 0.5 student guidance personnel or half of a SGS Grant. Primary schools operating less than five classes are supported by Student Guidance Officers from the EDB. In fact, our manning ratio of student guidance personnel is comparable to the neighbouring areas and that of the USA<sup>1</sup>.

10. To further enhance student guidance service in primary schools, having regard to the views and concerns of relevant organizations, a top-up SGS grant (top-up grant) is provided to public sector primary schools starting from this school year. The amount of the top-up grant is calculated according to the number of classes of a school. This can effectively improve the existing funding mechanism which sets the threshold at 18 classes. Take a primary school operating 24 classes as an example. In the 2012/13 school year, it receives funding of about \$620,000 (a full SGS grant of \$511,404 plus the top-up grant of \$105,000), representing an increase of about 21%. As for a smaller primary school operating 12 classes, it receives about \$380,000 (half of a SGS grant of \$255,702 plus the top-up grant of \$120,000), representing an increase of about 47%. On the whole, about 70% schools across the territory are provided with a top-up grant of \$100,000 or above.

11. The top-up grant arrangement is well received by schools. The initial views we gathered from visits and meetings with schools reveal that the top-up grant is used primarily for strengthening manpower and/or procurement of service to complement and supplement the existing student guidance service so that stepped-up efforts are taken to prevent and handle student problems. Almost all schools are able to deploy the new resources flexibly to

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<sup>1</sup> In Taipei, a school with 1 to 24 classes is allocated with one teacher counselor. In Macau, 0.5 guidance personnel is allocated for every 500 students, up to the limit of 2 500 students. The ratios for different States and counties in the USA range from 1:200 to 1:800, with an average of 1:459.

recruit one or more full-time school-based student guidance personnel. Based on their circumstances, schools also enhance their developmental, preventive and remedial student guidance services, including:

- Increasing the number of theme-based guidance activities or turning one-off programme into a series of programmes at grade/class level;
- Expanding the activities and content of some regular guidance programmes to include those students not yet covered;
- Providing students with additional counselling and/or educational psychology services on a case by case basis;
- Improving parent support services such as enhancing parent groups and organising theme-based parental training sessions; and
- Providing teachers with training on concepts and skills of student guidance with a view to equipping them for handling student problems they encounter.

12. As shown from the above, the Administration has enhanced the provision of resources on student guidance service a number of times over the past ten years, resulting in a favourable manning ratio of student guidance personnel. The existing diversified modes of funding are flexible. It allows schools to decide, having regard to their actual circumstances, whether to appoint teachers with counselling experience and qualifications or social workers to support the implementation of their CSGS. Such flexibility is well received by schools and sponsoring bodies and can also meet the different needs of different primary schools. Against this background, the EDB has no plan to change the existing funding modes. Since the beginning of this school year, the top-up grant arrangement has been in operation just for a few months. We consider that the present focus of work is not to study the increase of manpower, but to further gauge the progress of student guidance service and the effectiveness of the top-up grant. In this connection, we have planned to conduct a questionnaire survey in all primary schools by the end of the year on their views and deployment of the top-up grant.

#### Updating guidelines

13. To ensure effective implementation of the CSGS policies, the EDB has revised and uploaded the Guidelines on Comprehensive Student Guidance Service (Guidelines) onto its website in August 2012. Apart from setting out the administrative and financial arrangements for provision of the top-up grant, the Guidelines has revisited the CSGS'

objectives, principles, scope of services, functions of student guidance teams and team members, and annual plans/reviews, etc. as appropriate.

14. We note that there is a suggestion that the EDB should cancel the tendering system to maintain the stability of the service. Regarding this opinion, we in fact have all along explained to NGOs the necessity and rationale of retaining the prevailing tendering practice and requirements. Following the principle of open and fair competition, the EDB requires public sector schools to select suitable contractors/suppliers through competitive quotation/tender exercises at regular intervals in procuring services. This requirement has also taken into account the graft prevention guide of the Independent Commission Against Corruption. Based on the above principle, schools are required to conduct tendering exercises in deploying the SGS Grant and top-up grant to procure student guidance service.

15. As far as we understand, most primary schools that procure student guidance service did secure continual services using the tendering mechanism. There is no evidence that conducting competitive quotation/tender exercises at regular intervals has had an adverse impact on the continuity of service. Anyway, in response to these comments, we remind schools, through the above Guidelines or meetings, that they may devise objective assessment criteria to take into account factors such as service providers' experience and quality of service, and tender price is not the sole consideration in selecting service providers. Schools may, according to their own needs, enter into service contracts with a contract period running for more than one year. This will ensure that the student guidance personnel sent by the selected service provider can provide stable and continued services. In accordance with the principle of open and fair competition, schools are required to conduct a competitive quotation/tender exercise at least once every three years.

#### Strengthening the counselling roles of stakeholders

16. To ensure the quality of guidance service for primary students, the EDB's professional staff responsible for student guidance service directly supervise the work of student guidance personnel and help them familiarise with relevant policies, resource utilisation and professional skills. At the same time, they also strive to enhance the counselling capabilities of stakeholders (including the school leaders, student guidance personnel and class teachers) for empowering them to play their roles in the CSGS more effectively. As regards cases handling by schools, with the expansion of the school-based educational psychology service (to cover all public sector primary schools by the 2016/17 school year), school-based educational psychologists are better positioned to offer support to student guidance personnel in handling difficult cases.

17. For the supervisory role at leadership level, we invite principals/vice-principals with outstanding achievements to share their strategies in the implementation of CSGS every year. During school visits, we also discuss with principals/vice-principals the work and supervision of their student guidance personnel, and go through their annual guidance plans and reviews together. Currently, actions are also taken to enhance the school management's supervision and management of student cases, including the opening, keeping tracking and closing of cases. If the schools are not confident enough to manage student guidance personnel with social work experience and qualifications, we have been reminding schools through various channels, e.g. the abovementioned Guidelines, that they may also procure additional professional supervisory services from NGOs with professional quality assurance mechanisms in place at the time when they procure student guidance service.

18. Some student guidance personnel and their NGOs have reflected to the EDB that in recent years, they have been required to provide support for students with special educational needs (SEN) on top of their regular duties. In response to this, we have to explain that same as student guidance service, the EDB has been advocating the implementation of integrated education through a Whole School Approach, with a view to supporting students with SEN through the co-ordination of school policy, culture and supportive measures. At present, most schools have set up their student support teams or similar responsible teams to co-ordinate internal deployment of resources and implementation of various supportive measures. Professionals holding different posts in schools (including student guidance personnel, educational psychologists, members of student support teams, teachers, etc.) should fully perform their respective professional roles and support students with SEN through multi-disciplinary collaboration in areas of learning, behaviour and personal development. Through seminars and school visits, we advise schools clearly that student guidance personnel should serve on the student support teams and work collaboratively with the teaching staff with focus on supporting students with emotional/behavioural problems. Furthermore, we remind schools to fully utilise the resources and other professional support made available for implementing integrated education to cater for students with SEN. All these measures help promote the effective implementation of integrated education. They also enable student guidance personnel to focus on guidance work and perform their professional roles.

#### Enhancing training and professional exchange among teachers

19. The EDB has commissioned tertiary institutions to offer 102-hour Certificate Courses on Student Guidance and Discipline for Teachers of Primary Schools and 36-hour Short Courses on Consultation and Mentorship for Heads of Guidance and Discipline Teams. The content of the programmes is updated annually, with new modules on the latest development of guidance and discipline, and discussions on emerging student problems and corresponding ways to handle. This will help teachers and student guidance personnel in

primary schools enhance their strategies and skills necessary for early identification, handling and prevention of student problems.

20. To address student problems of public concern, such as bullying, Internet traps, child abuse and compensated dating, etc., the EDB organised more than 135 multifaceted training activities for staff in primary schools, including workshops, seminars, networking meetings for student guidance personnel and an annual sharing session “Guidance and Discipline Parade” in the past three years. Nearly 10 000 staff members took part in these training activities.

21. We encourage student guidance personnel to actively join overseas exchange programmes to broaden the perspective through drawing reference from practical experience in guidance and discipline. It in turn will improve the effectiveness and refine the delivery of student guidance service. Visiting teams comprising officers from the EDB, school staff and members of professional bodies made visits to schools and tertiary institutions and exchanged with the local staff during their trips to Shanghai, Japan, the USA, etc. In July 2012, the First International Conference on School Guidance in the Chinese Communities was hosted in Hong Kong in collaboration with the Hong Kong Baptist University. The conference attracted an attendance of 700 participants and over 120 speeches were delivered on a wide range of topics. To sustain this international exchange platform on school guidance, the conference will be organised every two years and the next conference will be held in 2014 in Shanghai.

#### Incorporating new elements into diversified guidance support programmes

22. In response to public concern and students’ needs, the EDB has timely implemented diversified guidance support programmes. For instance, new elements or updated content have been incorporated into some existing programmes, such as “Pupil Ambassador: Active, Bright and Caring” Scheme, and Caring Schools Award Scheme. New projects have also been launched, for example, Anti-bullying Campaign, Anti-drug education, etc.

23. At present, all public-sector primary schools, with the assistance of ordinary teachers, will provide at least 12 sessions of Personal Growth Education (PGE) to students at all grades every year. PGE aims at facilitating students’ growth in four domains, namely personal, social, academic and career development. It helps students to self-understand themselves, respect and accept others, develop learning skills and attitude so that they can apply such knowledge, skills and attitude in everyday life. To strengthen the role of student guidance personnel in coordinating and facilitating teachers in delivering PGE, we have strived to develop the planning of PGE through a theme-based approach that meets the prevailing needs of students, such as anti-bullying, anti-drug and life planning. A pilot run is

underway and we expect that the deliverables can be uploaded onto the EDB home page by the end of the year.

24. To enhance the resilience of students, the EDB has been launching the Understanding Adolescent Project (UAP) since the 2004/05 school year. In the 2012/13 school year, over 380 primary schools have joined the UAP. Apart from providing basic programmes for all students of the grade, the UAP identifies students in greater need for intensive support by making use of the “Hong Kong Student Information Form (HKSIF)”, which is a set of validated screening tool, in order to early identify and support them through small group counselling, adventure-based training and parent-child activities. In the 2009/10 school year, we have lowered the eligibility requirements for two intensive programmes, reducing the group size from 40 to 30 target students to allow more schools to be eligible for the grant. To make the HKSIF more user-friendly, we have developed a web-based version which will be launched through an on-line platform by May 2013.

#### Continuous professional support

25. The EDB also supports the guidance and discipline work at school by providing professional consultation services, conducting school visits and publishing Guidance and Discipline Digest quarterly. We also invite relevant organisations to share in our Guidance and Discipline Digest their visions and updates on guidance and discipline so as to promote synergy in ‘teaching, guidance and discipline’ among fellow workers. In recent years, we have produced a series of resource packages and websites to support the work of guidance service in schools, such as “Be Netwise” Internet Education Resource Package (2010), “Co-creating Harmonious Schools – Stop Bullying” Anti-bullying Day/Week Resource Package (2010), “Student Suicide for Schools: Early Detection, Intervention and Postvention” (2011) and a resource website on “Cyber Dating, Cyber Sex”.

#### **Way forward**

26. The EDB has been monitoring and reviewing the implementation of student guidance service in primary schools through collection of information from schools, conducting school visits, and seeking the views of stakeholders, including tertiary institutions, school sponsoring bodies and related teacher organisations. On the development of guidance and discipline work, we have regular meetings with representatives from professional bodies to discuss relevant thematic projects and exchange views on issues of teenagers’ development that are of common concern. Through the arrangement of the Hong Kong Council of Social Service, the EDB also meets regularly with student guidance service providers to exchange views on the development of guidance service. We will continue to keep in view the



implementation of student guidance service in primary schools and strive to help schools strengthen the service.

**Advice sought**

27. Members are invited to note and advise on the rationale and latest development of the CSGS.

Education Bureau

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