

**Progress Report**  
**on the Motion on “Returning a Happy Childhood to Students”**  
**Proposed at the Legislative Council Meeting of 5 November 2014**

At the Legislative Council meeting held on 5 November 2014, the motion on “returning a happy childhood to students” (see Annex) moved by Hon Michael TIEN was passed with amendments from Dr Hon Helena WONG, Hon Alice MAK, Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG and Hon Charles Peter MOK. This report briefs Members on the Administration’s stance on the matter and the relevant follow-up actions.

2. The Education Bureau (EDB) has been formulating education policies with students’ benefits as our prime consideration. On this principle, appropriate measures are implemented, including promotion of curriculum reforms, refinement of examination and assessment systems, reinforcement of students’ career planning, enhancement on the multiple pathways under post-secondary and vocational education, etc. We share the same vision with the general public in hoping that our students will have joyful learning, as well as balanced and healthy development. In addition to supporting frontline educators, we also encourage home-school co-operation to facilitate the implementation of these measures.

Promoting Curriculum Reform to Achieve Whole-person Development

3. Over the last dozen years or so, the curriculum reform has been emphasising a student-centered approach, and schools are given clear guidelines that in the best interest of student learning, they should flexibly adjust and formulate their school-based curriculum as well as teaching and assessment strategies to cater for students’ learning diversity. In line with the curriculum reform, teachers are progressively adopting more diversified teaching strategies, and their role has changed from an imparter of knowledge to a facilitator of learning, who will adopt different teaching strategies in light of students’ learning context and learning needs, e.g. co-operative learning, application of information technology for interactive learning and “flipped classroom” to enhance students’ learning effectiveness. We have reiterated and stressed in the curriculum guide for primary schools, which was updated in 2014, that schools should have concerns about students’ whole-person development, and draw up appropriate school-based curriculum, homework and assessment policies based on students’ specific abilities, interests and needs to ensure that they can enjoy different physical and aesthetic activities after school and develop a healthy lifestyle.

4. The three-year senior secondary education provides students with a broader and more balanced curriculum, and enables them to select subjects that they like most or suit them most and realise their potential. The new curriculum also helps nurture positive values and attitudes in students through Other Learning Experiences. We launched the medium-term review on the New Senior Secondary curriculum and assessment in October 2013 to address issues that may require longer time for comprehensive review and consultation.

5. At the kindergarten level, the Guide to Pre-primary Curriculum stresses that early childhood education lays the foundation for life-long learning and whole-person development. The core value of early childhood education lies in “child-centeredness”. Kindergartens

should formulate their curriculum according to the basic principles of “children’s development” and “children’s learning”. Children’s learning interest, needs and abilities should also be taken into consideration to create an environment that can develop their multiple intelligences and foster their holistic development.

#### Enhancement of Progression Pathways as well as Examination and Assessment Systems to Mitigate Students’ Pressure

6. Under the New Academic Structure, with the replacement of the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination and the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination with the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination, students can spend less time preparing for and sitting for examinations and there will hence be more room and time for learning. Also, the progression obstacles in senior secondary education and the pressure faced by students can be minimised. To reduce the workload of School-based Assessment (SBA), we have announced the further streamlining of SBA for 12 subjects and the non-implementation of SBA for three subjects. Currently, we are conducting a review on issues relating to cross-subject co-ordination and workload based on which the last batch of medium-term recommendations is expected to be announced in July 2015.

7. Basic education is to help students develop their potentials so as to lay a solid foundation for lifelong learning and whole-person development. Premised on the above, the EDB has implemented the revised arrangements for the Primary One Admission (POA) and the Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA) Systems. Under the POA System, schools are not allowed to use children’s ability (including academic results) as an admission criterion in order to reduce the incentive for drilling children in early childhood education. We have revised the SSPA arrangements that primarily, secondary schools are required to consider applicants’ overall performance (both academic and non-academic results in school) and/or interview results at the Discretionary Places stage, and public examinations that have direct bearing on students’ allocation results at the Central Allocation stage have been obviated to alleviate the pressure on students.

8. In April 2014, we announced the enhancement measures for the Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA) to maximise the effectiveness of TSA in providing feedback on learning and teaching. We also ceased to release students’ basic competency attainment rates to individual primary schools, as well as removed the TSA from the Key Performance Measures for primary schools. This serves to prevent schools from making use of students’ basic competency attainment rates inappropriately for ranking and comparisons among schools or changing their own teaching and assessment methods, thereby reducing the incentive for and the pressure arising from excessive drilling. Regarding the proposal to merge the TSA with the Pre-Secondary One Hong Kong Attainment Test (Pre-S1 HKAT), a working group was set up in 2010 to study its feasibility. After thorough discussion, members of the working group shared the view that since the two assessments differed in terms of their functions, nature and content, they could neither be merged nor replaced by a single new assessment to fulfil the notion of “one-assessment dual functions”. The working group then recommended in 2011 the alternate-year arrangement for the TSA and Pre-S1 HKAT. As shown by a review conducted on the TSA in 2012, most teachers interviewed considered the alternate-year arrangement appropriate. Therefore, when putting forward our

enhancement measures in 2014, we announced that the alternate-year arrangement would continue so that both assessments could fulfil their respective functions and that the pressure on primary school students, teachers and parents could be relieved. As the enhancement measures have been implemented for only a short period of time, schools should be given more time to make adaptations and changes accordingly. With a view to optimizing teaching effectiveness, we will continue to enhance the professional training and support provided for schools to assist them in making better use of students' performance data, and keep existing measures regularly monitored in the light of actual circumstances.

#### Providing Multiple Pathways and Life Planning to Enhance Students' Learning Motivation

9. The Government has been striving to provide young people with quality and diversified study pathways with multiple entry and exit points. At present, there are 19 local degree-awarding higher education institutions, among which nine are government-funded. In the 2014/15 school year, a total of some 300 undergraduate programmes are offered, together with some 400 sub-degree programmes covering various academic and professional disciplines. The Government has been adopting a two-pronged approach to promote the parallel development of publicly-funded institutions and self-financing institutions. Since the 2012/13 school year, the University Grants Committee (UGC) has increased the number of student places for first-year first-degree programmes to 15 000 each year. As for the self-financing post-secondary sector, the number of student places for full-time locally-accredited self-financing degree programmes is about 8 600 for the 2014/15 school year. The Government will further increase the opportunities for higher education through various means. Apart from gradually increasing the number of senior year undergraduate intake places for UGC-funded degree programmes to 5 000 from the 2015/16 school year, the Government is implementing a number of initiatives to subsidise local students to pursue degree education in and outside Hong Kong. Students can enroll for Yi Jin Diploma Programme according to their aspirations and abilities to obtain formal qualifications necessary for their employment and continuous learning. Another option is the comprehensive, diversified and quality career-oriented curriculum courses provided by the Vocational Training Council. Alternatively, students may choose among over 1 000 non-local programmes offered in Hong Kong, or distance learning and blended learning programmes provided by the Open University.

10. To help students understand their own capabilities, career/academic aspirations and purposefully explore their future career and life orientation based on personal interest and potential, the EDB provides a Career and Life Planning Grant for each public sector school and Direct Subsidy Scheme school with senior secondary curriculum from the 2014/15 school year. The Grant aims to enhance the capacity of the responsible teaching team so that life planning education is implemented and career-related learning experiences and activities are provided to students in a more co-ordinated and systemic manner. Moreover, the EDB also actively promotes the Business-School Partnership Programme to lead students out of the classroom to learn about different trades and gain a wider perspective of the world so that they can be well prepared for future employment.

## Broadening Parents' Thinking and Partnering with Schools to Promote Students' Learning

11. The EDB attaches great importance to students' physical and mental development. To this end, we strive to promote parents' understanding of the latest curriculum development and remind them not to over-emphasise their children's academic performance through various channels, such as organising different types of parental seminars and talks, as well as curriculum focus group meetings with different stakeholders (including parents), distributing relevant leaflets, and strengthening parent education in accordance with the updated curriculum documents (in respect of homework policies, children's right to leisure, safe use of the internet, etc.). We will continue to strengthen parent education with a view to making parents understand that they should not be preoccupied with "winning at the starting line" and force private tutorials or excessive extra-curricular activities on their children. We also seek to rectify their traditional belief that "entering university is the only way to success" and advise them to allow their children to make an interest-driven choice on progression pathway.

12. The EDB is committed to support schools in implementing parent education and setting up parent support networks. Home-school co-operation for improving students' academic and all-round development in a healthy manner is promoted through the Committee on Home-School Co-operation. To date, all the government and subsidised secondary and primary schools have already set up parent-teacher associations to organise school-based home-school and parent-child activities aiming at strengthening communication and mutual support. We will also continue to promote actively home-school co-operation activities in kindergartens.

## Supporting Family and Providing Guidance for Students' Healthy Development

13. Happiness comes from the family and happier families make happier children. The Employment Ordinance already provides for various kinds of employment benefits and leaves. An amendment to the Ordinance has recently been passed by the Legislative Council to provide three days' paid paternity leave for eligible working fathers. Besides, we have all along been encouraging employers to offer their employees, where practicable, benefits that exceed the statutory requirements as well as flexible and varied work arrangements and support, e.g. five-day work week, home office or remote work, compassionate leave and special casual leave, child care services and counselling services on stress or emotional management, etc.

14. To support parents who are unable to take care of their children temporarily because of work or other reasons, the Government has all along been providing subsidies to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to run a variety of child care services for children below the age of six. The Chief Executive announced in the 2015 Policy Address that we will enhance child care services to provide better support for women who wish to join the job market. Apart from increasing full-day child care places for children aged below three, the Government will, from 2015-16 onwards, increase by phases the provision of places of Extended Hours Service at child care centres and kindergarten-cum-child care centres to over 6 200 places, representing a fourfold increase. On the other hand, through the Fee Waiving Subsidy Scheme for After School Care Programme, the Social Welfare Department (SWD) provides assistance to needy families by waiving or reducing the fee of after-school care

services provided by NGOs for children aged six to 12. From December 2014 onwards, the SWD has been providing subsidies to 34 after-school care centres to enhance after-school care services by extending the service hours on weekday evenings, Saturdays, Sundays and school holidays in some after-school care centres, and to provide a total of 299 additional full fee-waiving places. The Government will also provide matching grants amounting to \$200 million via the Partnership Fund for the Disadvantaged to encourage the business sector and organisations to work with schools to launch more after-school learning and support programmes for primary and secondary school students from grassroots families.

15. Through the provision of courses and guidance activities, the EDB works in collaboration with parents to help students set reasonable expectations so that students can better appreciate their own strengths and accept their own weaknesses. At the same time, parents should be aware of children's whole-person development and make sure that they have adequate time for taking an after-school break, enjoying various physical and aesthetic activities, and developing their personal interests. Also, parents should enable their children to maintain good relationships with their families, peers and friends, and establish a healthy lifestyle. In addition, parents should encourage their children to take the initiative to share with others, think in different perspectives, and remain optimistic and positive when they encounter difficulties.

16. As regards children facilities, currently there are about 700 outdoor children's playgrounds under the management of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD). More than 800 sets of children's play equipment (including over 200 swing sets) are installed in these playgrounds and about 70% of such equipment has inclusive play elements to encourage all children including those with disabilities to have fun in the parks or children's playgrounds with their families. Moreover, some parks and playgrounds with specific features are promoted through the LCSD website for the public's reference. The LCSD will continue to seek the advice of the District Councils and children's interest groups to further enhance and promote its children's play facilities.

17. Overall speaking, we rely on the full support of the community and every stakeholder as we take forward education reforms effectively and work towards our goal of "Learning to Learn – Lifelong Learning and Whole-person Development". We will continue to review the effectiveness of our education system in a pragmatic manner so that our younger generation can receive education of a better quality.

Education Bureau  
February 2015

(Translation)

**Motion on**  
**“Returning a happy childhood to students”**  
**moved by Hon Michael TIEN**  
**at the Council meeting of 5 November 2014**

**Motion as amended by Dr Hon Helena WONG, Hon Alice MAK, Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG and Hon Charles Peter MOK**

That ‘Joyful learning’ is a learning guideline issued to schools by the Education Bureau, but the majority view of society has all along held that ‘pressure leads to progress’; nowadays, there are many books and discussions available at the market about ‘tiger moms and dads’, ‘helicopter parents’ and ‘monster parents’, etc. for boosting children’s learning, but excessive boosting may likely increase pressure on children and dampen their learning interests; the results of a survey conducted by the Programme for International Student Assessment show that some Hong Kong parents excessively intervene in children’s learning and drill them by being over-anxious for results, rendering a decline of children’s motivation to learn and a negative impact on their academic results; quite a number of media reports have also pointed out that some Hong Kong students have emotional problems because of heavy study pressure, and they become easily anxious and have symptoms such as insomnia, loss of appetite and irritability, etc.; all these problems are attributable to the education system which emphasizes solely on examination results; at the stage of kindergarten education, parents have already enrolled their children in many types of interest classes and request them to do dictation and spelling exercises, etc.; at the stage of primary education, students need to participate in the Territory-wide System Assessment, the Internal Assessments for Secondary School Places Allocation purpose that take place at the end of Primary Five and both in mid-year and at the end of Primary Six, and the Pre-Secondary One Hong Kong Attainment Test; at the stage of secondary education, students are faced with a shortage of university places and the ‘die or live’ pressure from the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination; in contrast, the education systems and teaching modes in many advanced places are better able to provide students with room for exploring their interests to enhance their creativity development; in this connection, this Council urges the Administration to:

- (1) assess afresh the pressure and psychological impact of the existing education system on students, and comprehensively review the examination system, the curriculum contents and the mechanism for progression in education;
- (2) enhance parental education to avoid parents from excessively boosting children’s learning;
- (3) enhance the support for school social workers and teachers to facilitate them to early identify whether or not students are under excessive pressure;
- (4) review the assessment contents of the Territory-wide System Assessment to

avoid the need for students to undergo mechanical drills on examination questions, and study whether the Territory-wide System Assessment should be abolished, so as to reduce students' study pressure;

- (5) allocate additional resources to assist students with learning difficulties and those with special learning needs, including identifying such students as early as possible and providing them with training and support on all fronts, so as to reduce their study pressure;
- (6) streamline the existing curriculum contents of primary and secondary education, so that teachers and students will not come under pressure for catching up with the curricula, and students can use the spare lesson time to cultivate their personal learning interests;
- (7) encourage schools to invite experts from different industries to hold workshops and experience programmes, so as to broaden students' horizons and enable their understanding of potentials, thereby cultivating the relevant interests and developing their careers in the future;
- (8) sort out the negative impacts of study pressure on students and give comprehensive care to students' physical and mental development, including increasing the support services provided by clinical psychologists and medical social workers in schools to offer emotional and psychological counselling to students, and expanding the school dental care service and the student health service to ensure that they have good physical health for learning;
- (9) enhance the education on building students' self-confidence and the promotion of diversified career pathways, so as to avoid taking examination results as the sole objective of learning by students;
- (10) develop a diversified education system, including strengthening vocational education, arts education and physical education, so as to reduce the pressure of public examinations on students, and assist those students who are unable to adapt to conventional education in choosing study pathways according to their abilities and interests; and
- (11) increase the number of tertiary education places, especially the degree programme places offered by institutions funded by the University Grants Committee, so as to alleviate students' pressure arising from the need to compete for such places.