

**立法會**  
***Legislative Council***

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**Panel on Education**

**Meeting on 3 May 2019**

**Background brief on support to  
students with special educational needs**

**Purpose**

This paper summarizes the major views and concerns of the Panel on Education ("the Panel") on the support measures for students with special educational needs ("SEN").

**Background**

2. Students with SEN refer to students who are in need of special educational support because of certain learning difficulties. The major types of SEN include specific learning difficulties, attention deficits and hyperactivity disorder, autistic spectrum disorder, speech and language impairment, hearing impairment, visual impairment, physical disability, and intellectual disability.

3. Based on the information provided by the Education Bureau ("EDB") in July 2017, the number of students with SEN studying in public sector ordinary primary and secondary schools in the 2016-2017 school year was about 42 890. At present, a dual-track mode is adopted to implement special education. Under the policy of integrated education ("IE"), students with more severe or multiple disabilities are enrolled in special schools for intensive support services, other students with SEN will attend ordinary schools.

4. The Chief Executive announced in her 2018 Policy Address that starting from 2019-2020 school year, an additional funding of \$800 million would be allocated each year for implementing the following support measures for students with SEN:

- (a) re-structuring the Learning Support Grant ("LSG"), Intensive Remedial Teaching Programme ("IRTP") in Primary Schools and IE Programme. LSG will be extended to all public sector ordinary schools and the grant rate for tier-3 support will be increased. Additional permanent teaching posts will also be provided for schools with comparatively large number of students with SEN. Under the enhanced measure, schools will have a more stable teaching force and additional resources for flexible deployment to support students with SEN;
- (b) upgrading the Special Educational Needs Coordinator ("SENCO") post to a promotion rank in public sector ordinary primary and secondary schools with a comparatively large number of students with SEN to facilitate SENCOs to deliver their leadership duties more effectively;
- (c) extending further the Enhanced School-based Educational Psychology Service ("Enhanced SBEPS"), with the target of about 60% of public sector ordinary primary and secondary schools receiving the Enhanced SBEPS by the 2023-2024 school year through enhancing the ratio of educational psychologist to school from between 1:6 and 1:10 to 1:4. The ratio will be enhanced to 1:6 for the remaining 40% of schools; and
- (d) creating school-based speech therapist ("SBST") posts in public sector ordinary primary and secondary schools by phases in three years starting from the 2019-2020 school year so that schools can form clusters for the employment of SBSTs to help students with speech and language impairment or other students with SEN to develop their communication and language abilities.

### **Major views and concerns**

5. In the Sixth Legislative Council, the Panel discussed the support measures for students with SEN at its meetings on 26 June 2017, 10 July 2017 and 2 March 2018. The major views and concerns raised by members are summarized in the ensuing paragraphs.

#### Special Educational Needs Coordinators

6. Members noted that starting from the 2017-2018 school year, the pilot project on SENCO to support IE would be regularized. Public sector ordinary schools would be provided with an additional teaching post (i.e. an Assistant

Primary School Master/Mistress ("APSM") in primary schools and a Graduate Master/Mistress ("GM") in secondary schools) by phases in 3 years so that a designated teacher could be assigned as SENCO. Some members considered that SENCO should be pitched at ranks higher than APSM/GM as they had to lead and coordinate support measures for students with SEN. There were also suggestions that of reducing the teaching load of SENCOs so as to allow SENCOs to have spare time to enhance support for students with SEN, strengthening in-service professional development programmes for SENCOs, and setting up a dedicated team in EDB to conduct regular school visits to support the work of SENCOs.

7. The Administration advised that members' views would be taken into consideration when a review was conducted. On teaching load, the Administration explained that the teaching load of a SENCO was equivalent to about 30% to 50% of the average teaching load of other teachers in the school with a view to enabling the continued enrichment of the SENCO's experience in supporting students with SEN.

#### Transition of students with special educational needs from kindergartens to primary schools

8. To ensure a smooth transition for students with SEN from kindergartens ("KGs") to primary schools, some members urged EDB to strengthen communication with other relevant bureaux/departments, such as conducting meetings for the student support teams of KGs and primary schools. Some other members suggested introducing individualized transition/bridging programmes for pre-school SEN children under which information of the child would be transferred to primary schools to facilitate SENCOs to plan for the support services for these students in advance. The Administration assured members that EDB would continue to maintain a close dialogue with the Social Welfare Department ("SWD") to achieve a smooth transition for students with SEN from KGs to primary schools.

9. Concern was also raised over pre-school rehabilitation services provided by SWD for children aged from birth to six. Some members considered that such services should continue until these children proceeded to primary schooling. According to the Administration, the provision of pre-school rehabilitation services would cease when the child reached the first 1 September after attaining the age of six. In other words, if the child reached the age of six during the school year, he/she would be provided with the services until the next school year commenced.

### Central database for students with special educational needs

10. Members urged for, subject to parental consent, the establishment of a central database for students with SEN so that information of individual students could be assessed by frontline personnel, including social workers, psychologists, etc. for provision of appropriate support services.

11. According to the Administration, EDB and SWD had agreed on a mechanism for the transfer of progress information of pre-school children from their KGs to their designated public sector primary schools. There was also an established mechanism for the transfer of students' SEN information from primary and secondary schools. EDB would closely monitor the operation of the respective information transfer mechanisms in the first place and consider the feasibility and effectiveness of setting up a central database at a later stage.

### Learning Support Grant

12. Some members expressed concern as to whether the schools fully adopting the LSG could employ sufficient number of teachers to support their students with SEN and whether schools were required to migrate to the LSG mode in six years' time.

13. The Administration advised that a mixed mode of the IRTP or IE Programme was allowed under the existing arrangement in which schools could have a teaching post and at the same time receive some LSG. However, as it was found that the learning needs of students with SEN might not be fully addressed under the mixed mode, EDB had conducted several consultation sessions with the schools concerned to gauge their views in fully adopting LSG. Schools had raised various concerns, for example, the stability of the teaching force should they opt to change to the LSG mode. EDB would address their concerns in the review of relevant measures. Although there was a timetable under the existing arrangement for schools which opted to migrate to the LSG mode, the policy would be adjusted accordingly if enhancement had to be made after the review.

### Resources for students with special educational needs

14. Members considered that the resources provided for schools to support students with SEN were inadequate. Early identification for students with SEN was important for rendering timely support. EDB should make reference to the schools of English Schools Foundation which provided intensive individualized support to students with SEN to facilitate their smooth transition from special schools to ordinary schools. The Administration noted members' views.

15. Some members noted that only one kind of speech-to-text software was available for candidates with dyslexia taking the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education ("HKDSE") Examination, and called on the Administration to provide more softwares for candidates' selection. The Administration advised that it was the first time to allow eligible candidates with dyslexia to use speech-to-text software in HKDSE Examination in 2017. EDB would keep in view with the implementation of the new arrangement with the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority and explore improvement measures if necessary.

### **Latest position**

16. At the meeting on 3 May 2019, the Administration will brief the Panel on the enhanced support measures for helping public sector schools to cater for the students with special educational needs.

### **Relevant papers**

17. A list of relevant papers on the website of the Legislative Council is in **Appendix**.

Council Business Division 4  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
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**List of relevant papers**

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Date of meeting</b>	<b>Paper</b>
Panel on Education	22.3.2016	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
Panel on Education	26.6.2017	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a> <a href="#">CB(4)1468/16-17(01)</a>
Panel on Education	10.7.2017	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
Panel on Education	2.3.2018	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a> <a href="#">CB(4)155/18-19(01)</a>
Legislative Council	30.1.2019	<a href="#">Administration's reply to a question raised by Hon Elizabeth QUAT (Question 18)</a>

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