

For discussion on  
2 July 2021

## **Legislative Council Panel on Education**

### **Learning Arrangements for Cross-boundary Students amid the Epidemic**

#### **Purpose**

This paper briefs Members on the learning arrangements for cross-boundary students (CBS) amid the epidemic and the support measures for CBS provided by the Education Bureau (EDB) and schools.

#### **Background**

2. CBS are Hong Kong students residing in the Mainland who travelled daily across the boundary to attend kindergartens (KGs), primary and secondary schools in Hong Kong before the epidemic. In the 2020/21 school year, according to the information collected by the EDB via schools in October 2020, there were about 27 000 students studying in KGs, primary and secondary schools in Hong Kong and residing in the Mainland, of which over 90% (about 25 000 students) were residing in Shenzhen. In view of the situation of the COVID-19 epidemic, the EDB had made announcements at different points in time on suspension of face-to-face classes and school activities in all schools. During the period, schools should continue to adopt diversified modes of teaching to facilitate students (including CBS) to learn at home. Subsequent to the stabilisation of the epidemic situation, the EDB announced whole-school resumption of half-day face-to-face class arrangements with effect from 24 May 2021, and local students have resumed classes in school. Owing to the epidemic prevention and control measures in Hong Kong and the Mainland, a small portion of CBS are temporarily staying in Hong Kong to attend face-to-face classes at school, while the majority of CBS are unable to come to Hong Kong.

#### **Support Measures for CBS amid the Epidemic**

3. The arrangements for CBS to resume travelling between Hong Kong and the Mainland for schooling depends on the development of the epidemic and the co-ordination between the two places<sup>1</sup>. During the period when CBS cannot be

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<sup>1</sup> During the period from 15 June to 17 July 2020, the EDB, in co-ordination with the relevant Mainland authorities, arranged about 2 500 quotas for CBS in Secondary Three to Secondary Five residing in Shenzhen to resume classes in Hong Kong. Under this arrangement, to dovetail with the joint epidemic prevention and control policy of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government and the Shenzhen Municipal People's Government, these CBS, who were exempted from the 14-day compulsory quarantine requirement, travelled across the boundary via two designated ports (i.e. Shenzhen Bay Port and Futian Port) and took point-to-point school buses to directly commute between schools and the boundary control points on the Hong Kong side. The schools concerned have also made corresponding efforts to put in place a series of stringent health and precautionary surveillance measures.

arranged to attend classes in Hong Kong, schools are required to flexibly utilise different learning and teaching modes to support students' continuous learning at home, having regard to schools' circumstances and students' needs at different learning stages, thereby achieving the goal of "suspending classes without suspending learning".

#### Supporting students' learning at home

4. During the epidemic, the EDB has implemented a series of support measures to assist schools in adopting diversified modes (including e-learning) to support students' learning at home. We have continued to provide advice for teachers in need and share good practices of schools through dedicated webpages, hotlines, mobile communication applications, online self-learning courses and webinars, etc. In addition, in collaboration with the Hong Kong Education City (HKEdCity), a wholly owned company of the Government, we have consolidated e-learning resources and proposed learning schedules for easier and more comprehensive reference of schools, teachers, students and parents. In consolidating the experiences of the parties concerned, which include the results of a questionnaire survey and the findings of focus inspections, we have updated the reference principles for supporting students' home learning with e-learning modes during the epidemic to provide guidelines on the related matters to schools.

5. Regarding secondary and primary schools, they assist students to make good use of the time at home to learn, encourage them to prepare for the lessons and to read extensively, and arrange small online study groups for them, etc. Schools have also developed numerous teaching video clips, conducted real-time online lessons and adopted online platforms/ learning management systems for supporting students' learning. Learning and teaching resources have been distributed to students via electronic means such as emails/ intranet while students are required to submit assignments electronically. Besides e-learning, in view of the situation of individual students (including those lacking computer devices or encountering technical difficulties in online learning), schools have also assisted these students in maintaining their learning progress by other means, such as delivery of learning and teaching materials, assignments and school circulars for them by post. Furthermore, under the agreements reached between individual schools and publishers, schools are authorised to upload relevant chapters of e-textbooks to e-learning platforms according to teaching and learning progress for use by students in need. If necessary, schools may also procure textbook delivery services to assist parents of CBS in delivering textbooks to their residential addresses in the Mainland.

6. Regarding KGs, since it is not desirable for young children to use electronic screen devices for long durations, e-learning is not recommended for

KG students. The EDB has encouraged KGs to design activities suitable for children's learning at home, such as encouraging children to read at home; producing and distributing learning materials that align with the learning themes, children's interest and abilities; and encouraging parents to support their children in doing simple housekeeping tasks, so as to help maintain children's learning motivation and curiosity, and collaborate with parents to better cater for children's emotional and moral developmental needs. To further support schools in helping children learn at home, the EDB launched new initiatives in December 2020 to provide a one-off subsidy to KGs joining the kindergarten education scheme, assisting them in implementing the "Gift Book Scheme" and the "Do It Yourself Handicraft and Learning Package Scheme" which aim to cultivate children's interest in reading and foster reading culture.

7. On supporting students with special educational needs (SEN), the EDB has specially launched the "Catering for Students with Special Educational Needs – Joyful Online Learning at Home" series for reference and use by parents during the epidemic, enabling parents to help their children with SEN continue to learn effectively at home amid the epidemic.

#### Supporting the emotional needs of students

8. To facilitate teachers and parents in understanding students' negative emotions that may arise from the epidemic and helping students handle those emotions and maintain their mental well-being, the EDB has specially launched a series of short psychoeducational videos for teachers and parents, namely "Suspending Classes without Suspending Love in the Epidemic". The EDB has also issued an information note on "Providing Emotional Support for Students in the New School Year" and information on mental health, facilitating teachers to help students maintain regular living habits under the epidemic. Besides, the EDB has, by means of organising workshops, enhanced the capabilities of teachers and school personnel in supporting students to release their negative emotions and stress. Furthermore, schools are specifically reminded to keep track of the performance of students with SEN in learning and emotion, and communicate with parents on a regular basis so as to review and adjust the support strategies and details at different stages.

#### Assisting schools in conducting assessment of learning flexibly

9. On assessment of learning, the EDB actively assists schools to adopt flexible measures and appeals to them to consider implementing different forms of continuous assessment as contingency measures, including assessing students' performance through quizzes, summative assessments, assignments or other professional methods. As for the arrangements of the Internal Assessments for

the Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA), the EDB has informed schools with CBS to make appropriate arrangements for conducting examinations or make-up examinations as far as practicable, including having the examinations conducted in the Mainland via their sister schools or appropriate service providers, so that internal assessments could be conducted under the principles of fairness and impartiality. As far as we understand, schools have co-ordinated with stakeholders in the Mainland and have relevant examinations conducted smoothly. Drawing on such experience, some schools have extended the same arrangements to other internal school examinations.

### Arrangements of the Primary One Admission and Secondary School Places Allocation Systems

10. Regarding the arrangements of the Primary One Admission System for 2021, in view of the fact that parents/guardians of some CBS may not be able to register with their allocated schools in person, the EDB has arranged to deliver a separate Registration Document to parents by post. Parents/guardians may send the documents to the schools for registration by fax, email or post, or authorise a representative to register with the schools on their behalf within the registration period in June. As for the arrangements of the SSPA System for 2021, the EDB has reminded all primary schools to contact the parents/guardians of CBS prior to the release of the allocation results. If they are unable to collect the allocation results and complete the procedure in person, the primary schools concerned will inform them of the allocation results by phone or other electronic means on the day of results release, so that they can approach the allocated secondary schools. Primary schools are also required to return the Admission Slips of the students concerned to the EDB for collection by the relevant secondary schools.

### Support programmes and services for primary and secondary CBS residing in Shenzhen

11. To strengthen the learning and emotional support for CBS, the EDB has commissioned a service provider to offer programmes on “Psychosocial Support” and “Learning Support” in Luohu, Futian and Nanshan districts in Shenzhen from May to July in 2021 for primary and secondary CBS residing in Shenzhen. The programmes support CBS through face-to-face session in small groups beyond learning at home. In tandem, service providers have also been commissioned to set up general service points in the above-mentioned districts in Shenzhen, with a view to providing CBS and their parents with useful information, learning and emotional support materials, as well as free-of-charge services for borrowing of books, recreation equipment and facilities. Besides, networking activities and sharing sessions will be organised to provide appropriate support and facilitate their communication with one another.

### Other support

12. Owing to the development of the epidemic and the epidemic prevention and control measures in Hong Kong and Shenzhen, some CBS, earlier on, were unable to come to Hong Kong for renewal of their expired Home Return Permits. Upon co-ordination, the Mainland authorities have implemented facilitating measures for Hong Kong and Macao residents to apply to the relevant department for the renewal of their Home Return Permit in the Mainland.

### **Way Forward**

13. The EDB has been maintaining liaison with the Mainland authorities on the arrangements of class resumption for CBS. Regarding the arrangements for the next school year, we will continue to closely monitor the development of the epidemic situation, the progress of vaccination in Hong Kong and the Mainland, as well as the readiness of schools. We will take into account the advice of health experts, explore the feasibility of attending classes in Hong Kong for CBS with the Mainland authorities in a timely manner, and collaborate with schools to work out appropriate learning arrangements for CBS.

### **Advice Sought**

14. Members are invited to note the content of this paper and give their views.

**Education Bureau**  
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