



中華人民共和國香港特別行政區政府總部教育局
Education Bureau
Government Secretariat, The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
The People's Republic of China

本局檔號 Our Ref.:

電話 Telephone: (852) 2810 2657

來函檔號 Your Ref.:

傳真 Fax Line: (852) 2868 5916

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Dear Secondary School Principals and Teachers,

Charting a New Course with Joint Efforts

With the new school year approaching, I believe it is our common hope that students will learn happily and grow up healthily in the coming year. I would like to thank all of you for upholding professionalism all along to nurture students with knowledge and love. Your efforts and dedication are much appreciated. On top of our continued efforts to support schools' day-to-day operation, the Education Bureau (EDB) will implement the all-graduate teaching force policy in primary and secondary schools and the policy of "One Executive Officer for Each School" in the new school year to recognise the effort of and strengthen support to principals and teachers. May I take this opportunity to wish you all the best in the year ahead.

Since June, Hong Kong has been plagued by the disputes and conflicts arising from the proposed amendments to the Fugitive Offenders Ordinance. With the legislative amendment exercise put to a complete stop, the Government is seeking ways to get out of the present predicament through dialogues so that our society will resume normal. Schools are havens for students to learn and thrive. Let us work together to maintain a risk-free school environment where learning and teaching activities can be conducted as usual, and students are nurtured as a new generation who love learning, embrace virtues, respect others, think positive and shoulder responsibilities to become future pillars of our society.

Nurturing talent by promoting whole-person development

With great importance attached to the nurturing of talent, not only has the current-term Government allocated additional resources for education, but also set up the Task Force on Review of School Curriculum to conduct a comprehensive review of the primary and secondary curricula at the system level. A set of initial recommendations under six directions, i.e. whole-person development, values education, creating space and catering for learner diversity, Applied Learning, university admissions and STEM education, is set out in the consultation document released in late June. With a firm grasp of students' needs, frontline educators are in the best position to provide inputs. Your valuable comments are welcome.

Expressing gratitude, to cherish, be proactive and optimistic

Secondary education is a crucial learning stage for constructing knowledge and acquiring generic skills. It opens the door for students to connect with and serve the community, but also to exploration of possibilities of their future. What Hong Kong has achieved today is attributed to the concerted efforts and perseverance of many generations. No doubt, their experience is a source of enlightenment, and their contributions deserve our recognition. With the mission of shaping the younger generations, schools are expected to help students embrace a thankful, appreciative spirit, and cultivate positive and optimistic attitudes to meet the challenges ahead.

In this connection, I call upon schools to actively participate in “My Pledge to Act” of the 2019/20 school year, and organize collective commitment and related activities which revolve around “expressing gratitude, to cherish, be proactive and optimistic”. The Quality Education Fund provides resources to schools by launching “My Pledge to Act – Expressing gratitude, to cherish, be proactive and optimistic” Funding Programme (<https://qef.org.hk>). Schools may conduct activities, in light of their characteristics and students' needs, lasting for one or more school years. For example, student award schemes, life camps, community services and creativity competitions could be organised to enable students to fulfil their pledges and enhance the effectiveness of learning.

Putting knowledge into practice outside the classroom

Teaching methods and contents that are lively, interesting and related to daily life can enhance students' learning motivation. With the provision of the Life-wide Learning Grant starting from the new school year, not only could schools procure learning resources and equipment, but also organise a diverse range of experiential learning activities to extend learning beyond the classroom, so as to enrich students' learning experiences, widen their horizons, nurture their lifelong learning capabilities, and facilitate their whole-person development. Through participating in such activities and interacting with their peers, students are expected to be able to acquire good interpersonal skills and develop positive values.

Addressing needs through enhancement measures

In the new school year, we will also implement a series of enhancement measures on integrated education that facilitate schools in strengthening support for students with special educational needs (SEN) through the Whole School Approach. Such measures include upgrading the rank of Special Educational Needs Coordinator and creating permanent posts of support teachers according to actual circumstances, increasing the rates of Learning Support Grant, disbursing a grant to support non-Chinese speaking students with SEN, extending the Enhanced School-based Educational Psychology Service, and creating the posts of school-based speech therapist.

I hope that the student support team of schools will continue to work closely with every staff at school to cater for students' needs through greater efforts in early identification and support as well as quality teaching. More importantly, schools should strengthen communication with parents to facilitate their understanding of schools' support measures and collaboration with schools to render appropriate support to students with SEN and help them to achieve better learning outcomes.

Marching forward with harmony and rationality

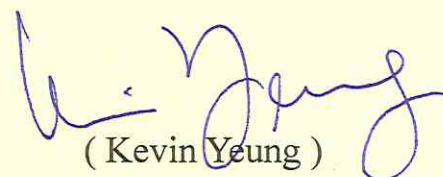
Hong Kong is a pluralist society, where diverse views are respected. It is most imperative that opinions are expressed in a peaceful, rational and lawful manner. Under the current curriculum, students are encouraged to be proactive in classroom discussion to develop their critical thinking as well as

communication and collaboration skills. In designing learning activities, teachers are advised to consider whether the contents are appropriate for students in terms of their age/class level. Apart from presenting facts from multiple perspectives with objectivity and neutrality, teachers may take the opportunity to help students develop positive values. As teachers' deeds and words have a profound influence on students, the public have high expectations for teachers' moral and professional integrity. I am sure that all principals and teachers will continue to uphold professionalism, set good examples for students and give them appropriate guidance.

Adjustment from summer vacation back to the learning and teaching routine would take time. Some students and teachers might even be perturbed by the social dispute and conflicts or related media coverage. It is hoped that schools would pay particular attention to the emotions of students and school staff, and seek appropriate assistance from school social workers, school-based educational psychologists or other professionals if necessary. In mid-June, useful resources and relevant hyperlinks were provided for download and use by school-based educational psychologists.

Personal development is a long journey. As educators, we are driven to help students identify their strengths and interests, basing on which set and pursue their goals. In the new school year, let us join hands, support one another and uphold professionalism for the development and future of our young people.

Yours sincerely,



(Kevin Yeung)

Secretary for Education