

# **Task Force on Home-school Co-operation and Parent Education**

## **Invitation of Views**

### **Purpose**

1. In December 2017, the Education Commission (EC) established the Task Force on Home-school Co-operation and Parent Education (Task Force) to review the existing approach in promoting parent education and home-school co-operation, and formulate the directions, strategies and improvement measures for fostering home-school co-operation and promoting parent education based on the outcome of the review. The objective is to assist parents to help their children learn effectively, grow up healthily and happily, and avoid excessive competition. This document aims to consult the public on the major recommendations made by the Task Force.

### **Background**

2. Parents play a very important role in the growth and learning of their children. Parent education activities can enhance parents' knowledge and skills needed for improving family life and ways in bringing up children. The scope of parent education is very extensive. Child-rearing skills, children's physical and mental development, parent-child communication, harmonious family, teaching students the proper use of the Internet, prevention of drug and crime for adolescents, etc., all fall under parent education. The measures on home-school co-operation and parent education implemented by the Education Bureau (EDB) mainly focus on supporting the parents of students from kindergartens to secondary schools, to help them guide their children to achieve whole-person development.

3. The Government promotes parent education through the collaborative efforts of various policy bureaux and departments based on their respective areas of responsibilities. In other words, apart from the EDB, other Government bureaux and departments such as the Home Affairs Bureau, Social Welfare Department, Department of Health, Narcotics Division and Hong Kong Police Force, have been taking forward parent education work under their respective purview.

4. All along, the Government has been actively fostering home-school co-operation and parent education. However, in recent years there have been opinions that the Government should have clearer goals and directions when implementing parent education, and by phases, and with continuity and universality. The Chief Executive, who actively listens to the views of the education sector and its stakeholders, announced in the 2017 Policy Address that, apart from implementing a series of priority measures to achieve quality education in the 2017/18 school year, education experts will be invited to steer the further review and follow up on other areas, including strengthening parent education and improving home-school co-operation. It is hoped that the culture of excessive competition will be reduced and children's health will be taken care of so that children can grow up happily.

5. The EC accepted the invitation of the EDB to set up the "The Task Force on Home-School Co-operation and Parent Education" in December 2017, to review the existing approach to promoting parent education and home-school co-operation. Based on the outcome of the review, the Task Force would formulate the directions and strategies for fostering home-school co-operation and promoting parent education with the objective of assisting parents to nurture their children to grow up happily and healthily, and learn effectively through, among others, promotion of correct understanding of developmental needs of children and adolescents as well as avoiding excessive competition. Mr Tim Lui Tim-leung, chairman of the Education Commission, serves as the chairman of the Task Force. The members of the Task Force include representatives from the Committee on Home-School Co-operation (CHSC), schools, parents, the EC, and experts on parent education.

6. The Task Force has drawn reference to the local researches on parent education, as well as the situations in implementing parent education and promoting home-school co-operation in other regions (including the Mainland, Taiwan, Singapore, United Kingdom, Finland, Australia, etc.). The Task Force has also reviewed the parent education courses and activities provided by Tertiary Education Institutes (TEIs) and non-government organisations (NGOs), ranging from certificate courses lasting for a few days to 2-year Master Degree's courses. In the past six months,

the Task Force has conducted in-depth discussion on different improvement measures. Based on the information and opinions currently collected, the Task Force has initially proposed directions, strategies and improvement measures for improving home-school co-operation and parent education. The main areas of parent education would include enhancement of parents' understanding of the developmental needs of their children, avoiding excessive competition, providing various articulation pathways, fostering home-school co-operation and establishing a good parent-child relationship.

### **Current Situation**

7. All along, the EDB's strategies for implementing parent education have been premised on schools as the platform to promote home-school co-operation and establish home-school partnership. Schools and parents can work in collaboration to consolidate students' learning and foster their healthy development. As regards the promotion of home-school co-operation, the CHSC was established in 1993 and has been actively facilitating the establishment of Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) in schools to strengthen home-school connection and communication. At present, all government and aided schools as well as nearly one third of kindergartens have set up their PTA. The total number of schools with PTA in Hong Kong is around 1 400 (including kindergartens). In addition, self-initiated district-based Federations of Parent-Teacher Associations (FPTAs) have also been established in 18 districts for coordinating PTAs in their respective districts and organising district-based parenting activities.

8. The EDB also provides subsidies for schools, PTAs and FPTAs in the 18 districts to organise a variety of home-school co-operation and parent education activities. In addition, the CHSC holds a number of parent workshops, seminars and talks annually, and jointly organises large-scale home-school co-operation activities with other organisations. The CHSC has also set up a website to provide parents with information on various parent activities and useful information (such as School Profiles), helping parents understand the developmental and educational needs of their children. According to the information from the EDB, the CHSC has organised or co-organised about 70 parent workshops, talks and other

activities in the 2016/17 school year. Besides, the PTAs and district FPTAs have organised a total of around 3 400 subsidised activities on home-school co-operation and parent education, with topics including supporting children in learning or growth, nurturing positive values and raising happy kids, with a total subsidy of about \$26 million from the EDB.

9. In sum, at present schools generally could maintain communication and co-operation with parents through different channels, including PTA. However, there are also views that the activities organised by schools and PTAs for parents are mostly home-school social activities and the Government should provide more resources for schools and PTAs so that they could play a more prominent role in promoting parent education. Moreover, although the Government and different organisations encourage parents to choose the suitable articulation pathway for their children according to their abilities and interests through organising different activities, under the competitive culture, many parents still set the goal of getting admitted to “prestigious schools” and furthering studies at university for their children, and some parents keep pushing their children to study hard.

10. To further improve the review, the Task Force is now inviting written submissions from the public to provide their comments on the proposed directions, strategies and improvement measures, especially on the issues concerned. The views collected will provide important reference to the review and facilitate the Task Force to formulate its final proposals.

## **Vision**

11. The Taskforce hopes to reduce the culture of excessive competition and safeguard children's healthy and happy development through the review and further enhancement of parent education and home-school co-operation.

## **Suggestions and focus of consultation**

### ***Proposed directions***

12. The competitive culture cannot be changed within a short period of time. The following long-term directions are proposed by the Task Force

to foster home-school co-operation and promote parent education.

- (i) Enhance parents' capacity, knowledge and skills on nurturing children and parenting so that they could understand children's developmental needs, abilities and potentials, and nurture their children in ways for promoting emotional health, so as to help them learn effectively, grow healthily and happily, as well as avoid excessive competition.
- (ii) Assist parents in getting a more comprehensive understanding of their children's development/alternative pathways, as well as their own abilities and personalities to set the future direction for their plan of nurturing their children. They should be advised not to pay too much attention to academic attainment, and neglect play and rest. They should also be advised to choose appropriate schools for their children according to their needs and not to regard attending university as the only pathway for children but to understand and accept alternative pathways for further studies and to help their children make better career planning according to their aspirations and abilities.
- (iii) Deliver diverse and innovative parent education and home-school co-operation activities to reach different types of parents, including "hidden" parents<sup>1</sup>.
- (iv) Foster better collaboration between parents and schools. Mutual connection and communication should be strengthened and partnerships should be built in order to jointly foster the healthy development of children in school attainment, mental and physical well-being. For instance, parents will understand how to help children complete homework appropriately and prepare for examination in concert with school education.
- (v) Further strengthen the role of PTAs and the competency of their members so as to develop the potentials of parents and strengthen parent-child relationship through planning and organising various developmental and recreational activities; and enable parents to better understand the needs of their children through parent education with a view to supporting students' whole-person development and improving parent-child communication.

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<sup>1</sup> Hidden parents refer to those parents who, for various reasons, do not participate in activities organised by the school for parents and do not communicate with the school.

### ***Proposed strategies***

13. Based on the directions proposed, the Task Force recommends the following strategies to formulate the improvement measures required to enhance home-school co-operation and parent education.

- (i) Adopt both service delivery (i.e. organising programmes/activities by the Government, NGOs, TEIs) and marketing strategies (e.g. public education campaign, mass media, internet portals, etc.) to enhance parent education.
- (ii) Provide school-based, community-based and territory-wide parent education programmes to enable all parents to have the opportunities to take part in the related programmes.
- (iii) For quality assurance of the activities, parent education activities or home-school co-operation activities should be evidence-based and provided in collaboration by different Government bureaux/departments, TEIs and NGOs.
- (iv) Develop a curriculum framework or a set of curriculum guides on parent education, with main areas covering enhancing parents' understanding of developmental needs of children, avoiding excessive competition, providing various articulation pathways, fostering home-school co-operation and building good parent-child relationship.
- (v) Provide a diversified mode for delivering parent education programmes, including e-learning and programmes run at school, in the community and workplace.
- (vi) Devise structured and thematic parent education programmes, and enhance the competence and leadership of the members of PTAs and FPTAs.
- (vii) Address the needs for parent education of those parents of children with special educational needs (SEN), non-Chinese speaking (NCS), newly arrived and non-attending children.

<p><b>Question 1:</b> What is your opinion on the directions and strategies proposed by the Task Force to promote home-school co-operation and parent education?</p>
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### ***Proposed improvement measures***

14. In accordance with the directions and strategies proposed above, the Task Force recommends the following measures to improve home-school co-operation and parent education.

#### *Development of curriculum framework and conducting local researches on parent education*

- (i) A curriculum framework or a set of curriculum guidelines on parent education should be developed with the help of TEIs and NGOs. The framework/guidelines should be able to cater for parents with children at different school levels, from kindergarten to secondary school level. The core learning objectives of the curriculum should include enhancing parents' understanding of developmental needs of children and adolescents, avoiding excessive competition, alternative academic pathways, fostering home-school co-operation and establishing good parent-child relationship conducive to children's development.
- (ii) At present, there are only a limited number of large-scale researches on parent education in Hong Kong. It is considered that parent education programmes and home-school co-operation activities should be evidence-based in order to meet for the genuine needs of parents. As such, the Task Force believes that more researches on home-school co-operation and parent education are needed and suggested a number of topics. The following are some examples:
  - (a) Study on parent-child communication skills in the 21st Century
  - (b) The impact of parents' over-drilling on their children
  - (c) How parents support their children in exploring different articulation pathways?
  - (d) How to promote the active participation of parents in the education process in school?

Question 2: What advice do you have for the proposed curriculum framework or curriculum guidelines on parent education from kindergarten to secondary school level?

Question 3: What advice do you have on research topics of parent education?

### *Community-based parent education programmes*

- (iii) TEIs/NGOs should be commissioned by the EDB to design and organise structured parent education courses while NGOs should be commissioned by the EDB to provide free parent talks/workshops on various topics regularly in different regions. The EDB should closely collaborate with other parties which also have interests in the well-being of children such as the Social Welfare Department, Department of Health and Hospital Authority in co-organising parent education activities or talks, jointly promoting parent education programmes, or sharing the information about parent education with each other so as to promote parent education more effectively.
- (iv) The EDB should provide more resources for FPTAs in organising community-based parent education programmes or activities for parents. For example, the number of activities that each FPTA could apply for the Subsidy for Home-School Co-operation Activities should be increased, enabling FPTAs in different districts to promote parent education. At the same time, the EDB should set up a new type of subsidy on an application basis for FPTAs to organise joint-FPTA parent education activities.

**Question 4:** What are your views on the suggestions of the Task Force on community-based parent education programmes? How to attract different parents to participate? Do you agree that the Government needs to increase the resources currently given to FPTAs in order to organise more home-school co-operation activities?

### *School-based parent education programmes*

- (v) The EDB should provide more resources for schools and PTAs in planning and organising more school-based home-school co-operation activities and parent education programmes so that more parents would be benefited. It is suggested that the number of activities subsidised by the EDB as well as the amount of the subsidy for home-school co-operation activities and parent education activities should be increased, enabling schools and PTAs to organise parent education activities. At the same time, efforts

should be made to avoid increasing teachers' workload.

- (vi) Teachers in school play an important role in promoting school-based parent education and home-school co-operation. Therefore, the EDB should provide short training courses for teachers to enhance their understanding on promotion of home-school co-operation and parent education, as well as enhancement of home-school communication.

Question 5: What is your opinion on the suggestions of the Task Force on school-based parent education programmes? Any other suggestions? Do you agree that the Government needs to increase the resources currently given to PTAs for organising more home-school co-operation activities? How to avoid increasing teachers' workload?

*Promoting home-school co-operation and parent education in kindergartens (KGs)*

- (vii) Publicity and education should be stepped up to help KGs and school sponsoring bodies (SSB) better understand the procedures and matters pertaining to the setting up of PTAs, disseminate the good practices of PTAs in kindergartens and encourage them to set up PTAs through territory, district and SSB-based sharing sessions/workshops. The amount of the Set-up Grant and Annual Grant for PTAs of KGs should be increased to encourage more KGs to set up PTAs.

Question 6: What advice do you have on how to encourage kindergartens to set up PTAs?

*e-learning courses for parents*

- (viii) The EDB should commission TEIs or NGOs to develop e-learning parent education programme to enable self-learning by parents through computers or mobile phones.
- (ix) The EDB's parent education website "Smart Parent Net" should be developed to become a more popular parent education learning platform by linking up with the relevant programmes of TEIs and

NGOs, as well as other useful resources, such as the videos and articles about positive parenting produced by TEIs and NGOs in order to facilitate parents' self-learning.

Question 7: In your opinion, how should parent education be provided and home-school co-operation be improved for working, busy or "hidden" parents through e-learning courses for parents?

### *Happy Kids Campaign*

- (x) The Task Force proposes to launch a “Happy Kids Campaign” to advocate positive parenting, let parents understand the importance of healthy and happy development of children, and avoid excessive competition. It is hoped that this campaign could help parents set reasonable expectations and requirements for their children and avoid over-drilling their children for outstanding performance in academic and extracurricular activities so that their children could develop healthily and happily. The EDB could provide a grant for all public sector primary schools as a funding to implement school-based activities under the “Happy Kids Campaign”, such as to advocate positive parenting through home-school co-operation, talks and courses for parents. The EDB should provide schools with the relevant guidelines and support.
- (xi) The EDB should promote “Happy Kids Campaign” through different platforms such as Announcement of Public Interest (API), the EDB parent education website, private/ NGO parent websites, Government buildings (community centres, hospitals, and libraries, etc.), MTR stations and advertisement boards at tunnel exits, or even TV programme production, etc., to widely convey positive parenting messages, reduce excessive competition among students, and let parents understand the importance of healthy and happy development of children.
- (xii) The EDB should produce videos and articles or invite submission on the theme of “Happy Kids Campaign” to disseminate good practices of positive parenting through the EDB’s parent education website.
- (xiii) A territory-wide slogan competition should be organised to produce a thematic and eye-catching slogan to remind parents not to pay excessive attention to their children’s academic performance/homework and effectively deliver positive parenting

messages.

- (xiv) NGOs should be commissioned to conduct out-reaching promotion activities such as photo-taking, games, and arts activities in places including public housing estates, shopping malls and markets so as to reach more parents of different levels including "hidden" parents, to promote the "Happy Kids Campaign".

Question 8: Do you think the implementation of the "Happy Kids Campaign" can help reduce the excessive competitive culture? What advice do you have on how to successfully implement the "Happy Kids Campaign" including how to avoid excessive competition? Do you think parents of different levels or "hidden" parents could be reached effectively through out-reaching promotion activities?

#### *Parent education at workplace*

- (xv) Talks/workshops on parent education should be organised for working parents at or near their workplace. TEIs or NGOs should be commissioned by the EDB to design and provide workplace parent education programmes specifically for working parents. These programmes should be open for application by companies, business associations and unions in various professions.
- (xvi) Promotion through media such as API should be launched to encourage companies to join workplace parent education programmes. Opportunities to co-operate with other organisations on schemes which promote corporate social responsibility could also be explored.

Question 9: What are your views or suggestions on organising talks/workshops on parent education at workplace?

#### *Parent education for members of different family status*

- (xvii) Parent education programmes specifically for fathers, mothers and grandparents should be developed to meet their needs in nurturing

children. Parent education for different family members should be included in the community-based and school-based curriculum framework and guidelines on parent education.

**Question 10:** Which types of parent education courses do you think should be specifically designed for fathers, mothers and grandparents?

*Providing parent education for parents of children with special needs*

(xviii) NGOs and TEIs should be commissioned by the EDB to provide tailor-made parent education for parents of SEN, NCS, newly arrived, non-attending children, etc.

**Question 11:** What are your views on providing parent education courses specifically designed for parents of children with special needs?

### **Invitation of views**

15. Any views/comments on the above directions, strategies and improvement measures are welcomed. Please send written comments to the Task Force Secretariat **on or before 14 September 2018 (Friday)** by post, e-mail or fax:

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