

**The Coordinating Committee on  
Basic Competency Assessment and Assessment Literacy**

**Report on  
Review of the Primary 3 Territory-wide System Assessment  
2015-2017**

**Education Bureau**

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## **Executive Summary**

### **Introduction**

- Assessment, curriculum and learning and teaching are closely related. Follow-up work after assessment is an important part of the entire “learning, teaching and assessment” process. Assessment not only performs the functions of screening and ranking, but more importantly serves the function of enhancing learning and teaching, i.e. adopting a variety of modes of assessment and strategies with reference to the goals and process of learning, and providing timely feedback to teachers and students to adjust teaching and improve learning, and to bring the greatest benefits to students’ learning. Therefore, assessment plays a vital role in quality basic education.
- In 2000, the Education Commission anticipated that the society’s deep-rooted concept of regarding assessment as a screening tool would be a major obstacle to promoting “assessment for learning”. To this day, as shown in the latest curriculum documents, “assessment for learning” is still a major component of the local curriculum framework, reflecting that it is an important element in providing quality and suitable arrangements for learning and teaching to address the needs of students.
- The arrangement of school-based management in Hong Kong allows the Government to devolve more responsibilities to schools and enable them to have greater autonomy and flexibility. To develop quality education, schools have to adopt appropriate teaching and management practices and seek self-improvement, and to ensure accountability for the quality of education.
- Pursuing school-based management policies, the Education Bureau (EDB) provides schools with a central curriculum framework that is coherent and flexible. Schools can make flexible adaptation and design a curriculum based on their school-based needs. Therefore, schools need a set of tools which are objective, reliable and valid to evaluate the effectiveness of the objectives set, the school-based curriculum and the arrangements formulated according to the schools’ actual circumstances.

### **Background**

- In 2000, the Education Commission proposed to implement the Basic Competency Assessments which comprise three components, namely

Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA), Student Assessment (SA) and Web-based Learning and Teaching Support (WLTS). TSA is a low-stake assessment as it serves to enhance learning and teaching. At the student level, TSA does not provide assessment results of individual students. At the school level, the EDB does not use TSA results to assess the performance of schools.

- TSA serves the function of providing feedback at the territory-wide and school levels, including:
  - Territory-wide Level
    - (i) Facilitating the review of education policies
    - (ii) Setting directions and priorities of professional training
    - (iii) Providing learning and teaching resources
    - (iv) Planning school-based support services
    - (v) Reviewing the curriculum
    - (vi) Using related data for further analysis
  - School Level

TSA school reports provide detailed item analysis for all papers and other supplementary information, helping schools to understand the strengths and weaknesses of all students. Schools can conduct further analysis for taking respective measures to follow up and help students learn.

#### Reviews in 2015-2017

- To address the public's concerns about TSA, the Secretary for Education announced in late October 2015 that the Coordinating Committee on Basic Competency Assessment and Assessment Literacy (the Committee) would conduct a comprehensive review of TSA. The Committee first gauged the concerns of different stakeholders and proposed targeted enhancement measures. Then it proceeded to introduce the Tryout Study in 2016 (involving about 50 primary schools) and the Research Study in 2017 (involving all primary schools in the territory) with a step-by-step approach and collected views and recommendations of different stakeholders extensively to review the effectiveness.
- The four major enhancement measures include:
  - (i) improving assessment papers and question design;
  - (ii) enhancing school reports;
  - (iii) strengthening diversified professional support measures; and
  - (iv) including a questionnaire survey on students' learning attitude and

motivation.

### Stakeholders' Views

- In the review process, the Committee has heeded and collected views and recommendations of the education sector and stakeholders through different channels. Views were collected through questionnaire surveys and 191 consultation sessions of various types (including focus groups, seminars and meetings), covering school sponsoring bodies of more than 70% of primary schools in the territory, about 3 000 primary school heads and teachers from 509 primary schools (including all government, subsidised and Direct Subsidy Scheme primary schools and some private primary schools) and more than 23 000 parents of Primary 3 students.
- Most stakeholders affirmed TSA's function and importance of providing feedback to learning and teaching at the territory-wide and school levels, and the enhancement measures in effectively alleviated public's concerns about over-drilling and risks induced by TSA.
  - School sponsoring bodies generally agreed that TSA should be maintained, and claimed that it was not true to say that they had used TSA data to exert pressure on schools. School sponsoring bodies sought to see how schools performed in TSA because they wanted to render support to schools in a focused manner. This was completely different from what had been said about exerting pressure on schools. They recommended that reports on students with special educational needs should be provided in addition so that schools could strengthen their support for these students.
  - School heads generally agreed that TSA should be maintained as it served as a set of objective tools for schools to grasp the effectiveness of learning and teaching. Some school heads even considered it necessary for schools that agreed with "assessment for learning" to continue participating in TSA and obtain school reports so as to improve and promote student learning. Some school heads recommended that reports on students with special educational needs should be provided in addition so that schools could strengthen their support for these students. Many school heads considered that the questionnaire survey on non-academic data enabled schools to learn about their schools' actual circumstances from multiple perspectives, thereby helping schools to formulate appropriate policies and further studies.
  - Overall, most teachers acknowledged the effectiveness of the enhancement

measures under the 2017 Research Study and opined that the Study did not exert pressure on schools. They considered that the items were aligned with the Basic Competencies, relevant to students' life experience, suitable for Primary 3 students' level and the duration of assessment and length of passages were suitable so extra drilling was not required. Teachers reflected that the enhanced school reports could meet the needs of different schools on the whole. Analysis of wrong answers in the information analysis report helped teachers identify students' strengths and weaknesses. The report also eased teachers' workload in analysing TSA data.

- Parents generally considered the refined TSA easily manageable for their children, and that the assessment had not exerted pressure on their children. Most parents trusted schools and indicated that schools had not over-drilled students for TSA. A questionnaire survey for parents' focus groups indicated that about 65% of the parents regarded school examinations, dictations, tests and homework as the main source of pressure in learning. Almost 20% of the parents opined that pressure was brought about by the competitive climate in society. Only nearly 3% of the parents considered that TSA was a source of pressure in learning.

#### Recommendations of the Review

- In its previous reports, the Committee has already mentioned that **simply** changing the administrative arrangements for TSA could not address concerns about drilling and risks induced. From the perspective of the education profession, the Committee considered that the aforementioned enhancement measures could effectively address drilling and risks induced by TSA, and reaffirmed the positioning of TSA in promoting "assessment for learning". Therefore, the Committee recommends that relevant enhancement measures be implemented on a regular basis.
- TSA may, if considered only from the perspective of the education profession, continue to be implemented in the mode adopted in 2017. Parents who are unwilling to let their children participate in TSA may decide on their own whether their children will participate in it. However, the Committee is aware that when considering the arrangements for TSA in 2018 and beyond, the Government must simultaneously take into account the community's understanding of TSA, the different pace among schools' development in the use of assessment information to improve learning and teaching, and perceptions of

some members of the community on the existing arrangements. Therefore, the Committee proposes the following direction for the EDB's consideration:

Collecting territory-wide data by sampling on a yearly basis

- The EDB can separately handle the arrangements at the territory-wide and school levels. If only feedback at the territory-wide level is to be collected, the Committee recommends to conduct TSA on a sampling basis. To ensure that the Government can obtain information of reference value at the territory-wide level (including territory-wide attainment rate, territory-wide percentage of correct responses and analysis of different groups of students), about 10% of Primary 3 students will be sampled from each school for the assessment each year. In addition, to understand the overall learning performance of non-Chinese speaking students and students with special educational needs and provide appropriate support, a certain number of students from these two student groups have to be separately sampled to meet the statistical requirements. Students' performance will only be counted as territory-wide data. Since only a small number of students in each school will participate in the assessment, school reports will not be provided.

Arrangements by the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) for schools which would like all their Primary 3 students to participate in TSA and obtain school reports

- In the review, the education sector generally agrees with the concept of assessment for learning. A considerable number of schools would like their Primary 3 students to participate in TSA and obtain detailed school reports so that they can draw reference from the analysis to improve learning and teaching in a focused manner. Therefore, the Committee recommends that the HKEAA should cater for the needs of these schools and make arrangements to enable all Primary 3 students to participate in the assessment and to provide school reports. Schools with such plans may approach the HKEAA directly. The HKEAA will make relevant arrangements and issue school reports to schools directly. The EDB will not obtain school reports of individual schools from the HKEAA.
- The Committee has also made a number of recommendations, including enhancing the assessment literacy of schools and teachers as well as their abilities to make good use of assessment information, strengthening support for schools, continuing the development of quality online learning-teaching-assessment resources, exploring greater transparency of



students' performance data, encouraging schools to organise parent education activities and fostering the community's understanding of assessment literacy.

### Conclusion

- “Assessment for learning” and “Basic Competency Assessments” aim at encouraging schools to understand students' performance, follow up students' learning in a focused manner and eliminate mechanical drills and rote learning. These aims are entirely consistent with society's long-standing beliefs that students should develop their potential to the full and the drilling culture should be eradicated. Attributing the drilling culture simply to TSA, whether this is based on the misunderstanding that “assessment is equivalent to drilling” or on the traditional notion that “assessment is used for ranking”, reflects the inability to grasp TSA's nature as “a low-stake assessment with emphasis on feedback” and the failure to focus on the crux of the matter instead of minor issues. This is not conducive to the cultivation of a good learning environment for students.
- The Committee considers that after the implementation of the new arrangements, it is necessary to closely observe the response of the education sector and the community, and make adjustments as appropriate to address the needs in respect of professional development.

## **Chapter 1 Introduction**

### **(1) Functions of Assessment**

1.1 Assessment is the practice of collecting evidence of student learning in various aspects (including the learning process and learning outcomes) followed by interpreting data and assessing students' performance for the purpose of providing feedback to students, teachers, schools, parents and other stakeholders as well as the education system, which is fundamental to improving learning and teaching. For the main concepts, basic principles, development and application of assessment, please refer to the Basic Education Curriculum Guide – To Sustain, Deepen and Focus on Learning to Learn (Primary 1 - 6)<sup>1</sup>.

1.2 Assessment, curriculum and learning and teaching are closely related. Follow-up work after assessment is an important part of the entire “learning, teaching and assessment” process. Schools and teachers have to make use of assessment information to:

- (i) diagnose students' strengths and weaknesses in learning;
- (ii) provide concrete suggestions for students to improve their learning;
- (iii) review and revise the curriculum design, teaching strategies and activities to better cater for the needs and abilities of students; and
- (iv) evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum and enhance the quality of teaching.

### **(2) Role of Assessment in Quality Basic Education**

1.3 In the 21st century, the rapid development of economy and information technology under globalisation has drawn more attention of different places around the world to nurturing talents. Therefore, education researchers are concerned about how to provide quality basic education. As stated in a document on the Education for All movement issued by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Education for All is a global commitment to provide quality basic education for all children, youths and adults<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, educators around the world attach great importance to systematic, comprehensive, reliable and valid information on the learning progression. Such information serves as a major source of reference for their deliberation of education and curriculum development.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://cd.edb.gov.hk/becg/english/index-2.html>

<sup>2</sup> Foreword, EDUCATION FOR ALL 2000-2015: Achievements and Challenges, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, p.i

1.4 Providing quality basic education aims to give all students equal opportunities to learn and fully develop their potential. Curriculum, learning and teaching and assessment are all important elements in education. In students' learning process, assessment not only performs the functions of screening and ranking, but more importantly serves the function of enhancing learning and teaching, adopting a variety of modes of assessment with reference to the goals and process of learning, and providing timely feedback to teachers and students to adjust teaching and improve learning and to bring the greatest benefits to students' learning.

### **(3) Situation in Hong Kong**

#### **(I) Implementation of “assessment for learning”**

1.5 In the “Reform Proposals for the Education System in Hong Kong” issued in 2000, the Education Commission anticipated that the society's deep-rooted concept of regarding assessment as a screening tool would be a major obstacle to promoting “assessment for learning”<sup>3</sup>.

1.6 To help schools carry out effective assessment, the Education Commission proposed in 2000 to introduce “Basic Competency Assessments” for Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics and provide schools with an additional tool to understand the learning progress and needs of students. In 2001, the Curriculum Development Council issued “Learning to Learn - The Way Forward in Curriculum Development” (Curriculum Development Council, 2001) and put forward concrete directions on “assessment for learning”, recommending schools to change the assessment practices and put more emphasis on “assessment for learning” as an integral part of the daily learning, teaching and assessment cycle<sup>4</sup>.

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3 Paragraph 8.2.41 of the “Reform Proposals for the Education System in Hong Kong”: The current assessment culture in Hong Kong is still steeped in traditions. The ultimate purpose of assessment should be to provide information that helps to promote learning and teaching, and forms part of the teaching process. However, in reality, tests and examinations have become the baton directing learning and teaching. Emphasis is not placed on how much students have learnt or whether teachers, parents and students themselves have a clear picture of students' learning progress, but rather on scores, ranking and grades. Furthermore, to facilitate marking and scoring, assessments are based on standard answers which hinders the development of critical thinking skills and reduces students' motivation for self-learning. In short, teachers, students, parents and the society in general should shake off their traditional concept of assessment and embrace the new assessment culture.

4 Learning to Learn – The Way Forward in Curriculum Development  
<http://www.edb.gov.hk/en/curriculum-development/cs-curriculum-doc-report/wf-in-cur/index.html>

1.7 To this day, it is still emphasised in the latest curriculum documents for Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics published in 2017, the Key Learning Area Curriculum Guides (Primary 1 - Secondary 6)<sup>5</sup>, that the promotion of “assessment for learning” should continue and there should be good use of assessment data to review students’ learning outcomes to inform learning and teaching. This reflects that “assessment for learning” should be a major component of the local curriculum framework, part of daily teaching, and even more, an important element in providing quality and suitable arrangements for learning and teaching to address the needs of students.

## **(II) *School-based management and school-based curriculum***

1.8 The Government has introduced the School Management Initiative (SMI) since 1991. In the Education Commission Report No. 7 on Quality Education issued in 1997, one of the major recommendations was that the Government should devolve more responsibilities to schools and enable them to have greater autonomy and flexibility to develop their own characteristics, cater for students’ different learning needs and enhance learning outcomes. To tie in with the implementation of school-based management, the Education (Amendment) Ordinance 2004 came into effect on 1 January 2005. At present, public sector primary and secondary schools in Hong Kong are operated by about 270 school sponsoring bodies. To develop quality education, schools have to adopt appropriate teaching and management practices in light of their own actual conditions, students’ abilities and the needs of the community, create individual culture and characteristics, and seek self-improvement to ensure accountability for the quality of education.

1.9 Pursuing school-based management policies, the EDB provides schools with a central curriculum framework that is coherent and flexible. Schools can make flexible adaptation based on their school-based needs and design a curriculum to cater for the needs of students, as long as it satisfies the requirements of the central curriculum framework. In line with the spirit of school-based management, schools need to evaluate the effectiveness of the objectives set, the school-based curriculum and the arrangements formulated in order to continuously refine the school-based curriculum and teaching practices, improve the quality of education and perfect school-based management.

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5 《中國語文教育學習領域課程指引（小一至中六）》（2017）  
<http://www.edb.gov.hk/tc/curriculum-development/kla/chi-edu/curriculum-documents.html>  
English Language Education Key Learning Area Curriculum Guide (Primary 1-Secondary 6) (2017)  
<http://www.edb.gov.hk/en/curriculum-development/kla/eng-edu/curriculum-documents.html>  
Mathematics Education Key Learning Area Curriculum Guide (Primary 1-Secondary 6) (2017)  
<http://www.edb.gov.hk/tc/curriculum-development/kla/ma/curr/index2.html>

1.10 In view of the aforementioned arrangements for school-based management and school-based curriculum as well as the differences among schools, a set of objective, reliable and valid data that can reflect the territory-wide standards needs to be provided for schools' self-evaluation. Such information, when coupled with internal assessment data, can give teachers a fuller picture of the learning progress and needs of students and serve as a reference for developing the school-based curriculum, designing teaching methods and providing remedial support for individual students, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of learning and teaching.

***(III) Assessment culture and assessment literacy***

1.11 Assessment literacy refers to the mastery of knowledge and skills about assessment. It involves understanding the concepts and functions of assessment, being able to clearly specify the learning requirements, effectively aligning assessment with the arrangements for learning and teaching, using different assessment tools according to different assessment purposes, making effective use of assessment information or data, providing quality feedback to students, and adjusting teaching strategies to improve students' learning.

1.12 Grasping of the concepts and application of assessment by the community and the education sector is particularly vital in promoting "assessment for learning" and changing the assessment culture. Therefore, the EDB is committed to enhancing the assessment literacy of the community, and helping the education sector and the community to understand the concepts and functions of assessment and to eliminate the misconception of "assessment is equivalent to drilling". While the concept of "assessment for learning" has been introduced for quite some time, it will still take time for the community to shift from the traditional notion of regarding assessment as solely comprising the screening mode to accepting the culture of "assessment for learning", and for the education sector to master the skills involved.

## **Chapter 2 Background**

### **(1) Education Reform and Introduction of Basic Competency Assessments**

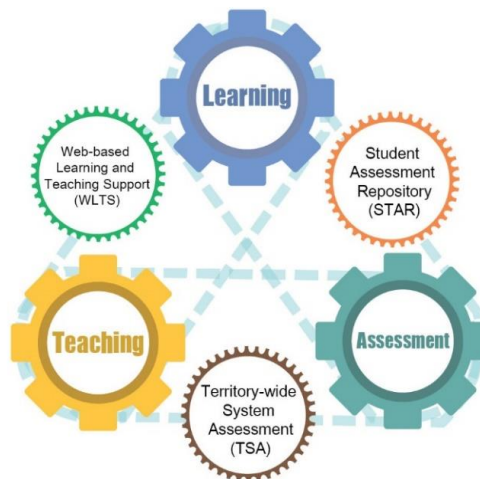
2.1 In 2000, the Education Commission proposed to implement Basic Competency Assessments in its report entitled Learning for Life, Learning through Life to better enhance the effectiveness of learning and teaching. The main objectives of Basic Competency Assessments are:

- (i) to provide the Government and the school management with territory-wide information on schools' standards in key learning areas;
- (ii) to underpin the Government's efforts to provide support for schools in need of assistance; and
- (iii) to enable teachers and parents to understand students' learning problems and needs so as to facilitate timely and targeted assistance through appropriate teaching practices.

2.2 Basic Competencies are the essential knowledge and skills that students have to acquire in relation to the learning targets and objectives set out in the curriculum for each key stage in order to learn effectively at the next stage. Basic Competencies are part of the curriculum and covered in daily teaching and internal student assessments of schools.

2.3 Basic Competency Assessments comprise three components, namely Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA), Student Assessment Repository (STAR) and Web-based Learning and Teaching Support (WLTS). These three components are designed specifically for the learning-teaching-assessment cycle:

Concept map of Basic Competency Assessments Programme



- (i) TSA is an objective, reliable and valid assessment tool conducted upon completion of three key learning stages (i.e. Primary 3, Primary 6 and Secondary 3) with a view to understanding students' Basic Competencies in Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics;
- (ii) Student Assessment (SA) is an online assessment item bank, capable of assessing through a computer system the performance of participating students and generating instant assessment reports for teachers' reference. SA enables teachers to gain understanding of students' performance in between TSAs conducted in different learning stages. Since 2017, SA has been upgraded as STAR, which provides a range of new functions (e.g. supporting the use of tablets) to promote assessment for learning and help teachers make good use of assessment information to enhance students' learning; and
- (iii) WLTS is an online platform designed for the development of students' Basic Competencies. It ties in with learning and teaching through the provision of ready-made learning activities and materials that address students' learning difficulties for teachers' reference and use. Teachers can identify appropriate teaching materials on WLTS according to students' learning difficulties as revealed in TSA and STAR and follow up students' learning.

## **(2) Design and Functions of TSA**

2.4 Serving as an assessment for learning, TSA is a low-stake assessment. At the student level, since TSA does not provide assessment results of individual students, it is by no means a tool for grading students, determining their advancement in studies or allocating school places for admission to Secondary 1. At the school level, the EDB does not use TSA results to assess the performance of schools.

2.5 Owing to a limited understanding of TSA and even misconceptions about its impacts, some schools drill students for TSA and put them under pressure. This has aroused public concerns. To alleviate schools' concerns about the risks involved in the use of assessment data, the EDB has removed TSA from Key Performance Measures for primary schools to put emphasis on assessment for learning since 2014.

2.6 TSA performs the function of "assessment for learning", providing assessment data to inform learning and teaching. The feedback includes information at the territory-wide and school levels, each serving different functions. The ensuing paragraphs elaborate on how information at the territory-wide and school levels

serves the functions of enhancing teaching arrangements and facilitating students' learning:

**(I) Territory-wide Level**

2.7 At the territory-wide level, TSA data can help the Government review education policies, provide resources, set directions for support measures and professional training, etc. Details are as follows:

Facilitating the review of education policies

2.8 TSA data reflects the overall performance of Hong Kong students and its trends of changes in the subjects of Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics. The EDB takes into account students' overall performance in TSA and their attainments in different Basic Competencies when setting the directions and priorities of education policies<sup>6</sup>.

Setting directions and priorities of professional training

2.9 The EDB analyses TSA data to understand the needs of all Hong Kong students in the learning and teaching of the three subjects of Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics, with a view to setting the directions and priorities of professional training<sup>7</sup>.

Providing learning and teaching resources

2.10 In the light of the learning difficulties reflected by students' performance in TSA, the EDB conducts case studies and collects teachers' views through focus group meetings. The WLTS, an online learning and teaching platform developed since

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<sup>6</sup> Through TSA data, the EDB has gauged the ability of lower and upper primary students in comprehending and summarising the main ideas of a passage. Therefore, the EDB encourages schools to enhance their strategies for teaching reading, and has set "Reading to Learn" as one of the four key tasks of the curriculum reform. For strengthening reading to learn, a series of online resources has also been developed for primary and secondary schools' reference.

<sup>7</sup> With the aim of improving language education at the pre-primary, primary and secondary levels, the EDB has, by making reference to TSA data, sought an injection into the Language Fund to strengthen support for teachers and students at pre-primary and primary levels. Support measures for teachers include:

- (i) sponsoring local serving teachers of the English Language subject in primary schools to attend overseas immersion courses lasting four to eight weeks or more;
- (ii) sponsoring primary school teachers to attend intensive courses focusing on specific aspects of the learning and teaching of the language subjects, such as grammar/phonics in context; and
- (iii) providing professional development programmes for pre-primary teachers.



2003, provides ready-made learning and teaching resource packages<sup>8</sup> for teachers' use or reference. At present, there are more than 730 sets of learning and teaching resources for Primary 1 to Secondary 3 levels, covering nearly 70% of Basic Competencies for the three learning stages. It is expected that resource packages covering all Basic Competencies will be available by 2019 for teachers' reference and use.

### Planning school-based support services

2.11 Curriculum, learning and teaching, and assessment are interrelated. The EDB has been providing schools with school-based support services<sup>9</sup>. In the 2017/18 school year, about 330 primary schools were provided with support services (including learning communities) rendered by the school-based support sections of the EDB in relation to the subjects of Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics. The EDB may make reference to TSA information in planning support initiatives for schools to apply in light of development needs.

### Reviewing the curriculum

2.12 TSA data is a source of reference for curriculum review<sup>10</sup>.

### Using related data for further analysis

2.13 Each year, the HKEAA sets out in the annual TSA report the research findings of the study on the same cohort of students. The HKEAA also conducts

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<sup>8</sup> Relevant resources, including teaching plans, suggested learning activities, presentations on teaching practices, worksheets and assessment tasks, enable teachers to help students acquire Basic Competencies in an effective manner.

<sup>9</sup> According to the needs of individual participating schools, support officers help schools make use of assessment data, such as student assignments, test and examination results, and performance in TSA, to understand students' learning. Through lesson preparation meetings, support officers collaborate with teachers in adopting the Evaluation-Planning-Implementation-Evaluation (EPIE) mode to conduct curriculum planning, designing appropriate teaching strategies and adopting diversified assessment methods, in order to provide effective feedback for students.

<sup>10</sup> Take the Basic Competency of 'using "gram" (g) or "kilogram" (kg) as the unit to measure or compare the weight of objects and using "hour" and "minute", "minute" and "second" or "second" to measure the time used in activities' in Mathematics as an example. Taking into account students' average TSA performance in this aspect as well as the reasons for not being able to grasp the content as pointed out by frontline teachers in focus group interviews, the EDB and the Committee on Mathematics Education under the Curriculum Development Council proposed an adjustment to the sequence of related topics when reviewing the Mathematics curriculum for primary level, so that students will not be exposed to particular topics until they have accumulated more relevant learning experience. The recommendation has already been included in the Mathematics Education Key Learning Area Curriculum Guide (Primary 1 – Secondary 6) compiled in 2017.

further analysis on students' performance to identify areas of unsatisfactory performance among students, with a view to exploring and providing options of further support services.

## **(II) *School Level***

2.14 At the school level, TSA school reports are provided. The reports provide item analysis for all papers and other supplementary information (starting from 2014, primary schools are no longer provided with the overall attainment rates in Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics), including the percentage of correct responses for each item and the performance of students in questions related to specific Basic Competency. By making reference to the schools' performance and the territory-wide results, most schools are able to identify the overall strengths and weaknesses of all students and evaluate the effectiveness of the school-based curriculum and teaching strategies. Based on the objective assessment data, teachers can engage in professional discussions and conduct further analysis to refine the curriculum and formulate plans to improve the effectiveness of learning and teaching with reference to their schools' development needs.

2.15 After analysing students' performance in TSA, schools can take respective measures to follow up, such as adjusting the teaching content, improving the design of assignments/assessments, and conducting after-school remedial programmes to address students' learning diversity. Such follow-up measures, capable of addressing the competencies of students participating in TSA, can also cater for the learning needs of students of different class levels, with a view to building a solid foundation for a good grasp of the Basic Competencies in the three subjects of Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics. If necessary, schools may make reference to the TSA school reports and apply for school-based support initiatives to render teachers and students subject-based assistance and address schools' development needs.

## **(3) *Public Concerns and Enhancement of TSA***

2.16 Since the introduction of TSA in 2004 (Primary 3, Primary 6<sup>11</sup> and Secondary 3 TSAs were implemented since 2004, 2005 and 2006 respectively), the EDB has maintained close communication with various stakeholders (including

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<sup>11</sup> Since 2014, the Primary 6 TSA has been implemented in odd-numbered years (i.e. 2015, 2017 and so on).

schools, teachers, parents, primary and secondary school councils, the Committee on Home-School Co-operation and the TSA Concern Group) to keep the implementation progress in view. Details on public concerns and respective enhancement arrangements for TSA are set out in ***Annex 1***.

## **Chapter 3 Review of TSA**

### **(1) Background of the Review**

3.1 Notwithstanding that the HKEAA has no longer provided primary schools with the attainment rates and the EDB has removed TSA from the Key Performance Measures for primary schools since 2014, some schools were still worrying that the EDB would use the TSA data to assess their performance. In addition, teachers in certain schools still assigned supplementary exercises to students because of TSA. Some parents thought that over-drilling of students because of TSA by some schools created tremendous pressure on students and affected the balance of students' learning. In some supplementary exercises given in the name of TSA, the items far exceeded the requirement of the Basic Competencies or were even beyond the curriculum requirements.

3.2 To address public concerns about TSA, the Secretary for Education announced in late October 2015 that the Coordinating Committee on Basic Competency Assessment and Assessment Literacy (the Committee) would conduct a comprehensive review of the operation and implementation arrangements of TSA. To strengthen the participation of different stakeholders, members from the area of home-school cooperation and representatives from primary and secondary schools have been co-opted onto the Committee.

3.3 The Committee has set up two working groups, namely the Working Group on Administration and Reporting and the Working Group on Papers and Question Design, to conduct an in-depth study of the administration, reporting and papers and question design of TSA. To better reflect views of different stakeholders, the working groups comprise members from various school sponsoring bodies, primary and secondary schools, as well as frontline teachers and subject specialists from tertiary institutions. Some Committee members have also met with relevant stakeholders to gauge their views.

### **(2) Public Concerns**

3.4 The EDB and the Committee attached great importance to the views of different stakeholders in the review process. In this connection, starting from 2015, the EDB has been meeting different stakeholders. Public concerns over TSA as expressed in the views collected are summarised below:

#### **(i) Culture of drilling and appropriateness of assessment items**

There were public views that some TSA items were beyond the scope of

Basic Competencies, and the number and length of assessment items were increasing. It was not possible for students to handle TSA without drilling. As such, TSA was the main cause of drilling and increased homework. On the other hand, there were some stakeholders who considered that the main cause of over-drilling was the competition among schools rather than TSA. The practice of drilling would continue even without TSA.

(ii) Different stakeholders' perception of the functions of TSA

Despite the low-stake design of TSA, some considered that TSA might affect students' advancement in studies as well as the allocation of school places and resources. Some members of the public queried how schools could enhance student learning and how the EDB could render appropriate school support by identifying learning difficulties with the use of TSA data if reports and assessment results of TSA for individual students were not provided.

(iii) Support for schools and students

Some stakeholders did not have sufficient understanding of the TSA-related support provided by the EDB, and members of the community were unable to grasp the EDB's support for schools and students in connection with TSA.

(iv) Public education

Since there was only a limited understanding of TSA and assessment for learning in the community, the EDB should step up public education to enhance the assessment literacy among various sectors.

**(3) Design of the Comprehensive Review**

3.5 The EDB tasked the Committee in end-2015 to conduct a review of Basic Competency Assessments and TSA. To ensure that it would be a comprehensive and overall review, the Committee:

- (i) first of all, gauged the concerns of different stakeholders over TSA through various channels and reviewed in detail the various arrangements of TSA (such as assessment papers and question design, school reports, and administrative arrangements for implementing TSA);
- (ii) then offered targeted recommendations for improvement (including improving assessment papers and question design; enhancing school reports; strengthening diversified professional support measures; and including a questionnaire survey on students' learning attitude and motivation);
- (iii) proceeded to try out in 2016 the initiatives for enhancement with a

step-by-step approach and on a small scale (about 10% of the primary schools in the territory), and to introduce in 2017 a research study whereby the initiatives for enhancement were extended to all primary schools in the territory, with a view to collecting more comprehensive feedback; and

- (iv) collected and collated the views and recommendations of different stakeholders at different stages extensively and systematically, and reviewed the effectiveness of various enhancement measures with an evidence-based approach.

#### **(4) Core Values and Objectives of the Review**

3.6 The Committee considered that the review of TSA should be premised on the promotion of quality education and the following core values:

- (i) learning needs of students;
- (ii) professionalism; and
- (iii) mutual trust among stakeholders.

3.7 The objectives of the review included evaluating the original design concepts and intent of TSA, studying whether the existing arrangements for Basic Competency Assessments have served the predetermined intent (including providing information for schools and the Government, improving school curriculum planning and enhancing learning and teaching), and strengthening professional support for schools and teachers under the Basic Competency Assessments initiative. In addition, the review would advise on how TSA should be implemented (including short, medium and long-term measures for improvement) to address public concerns (such as over-drilling, strengthening support for stakeholders, refining overall assessment and enhancing assessment literacy).

3.8 The Committee submitted reports in February and December 2016 respectively, proposing the implementation of the 2016 Tryout Study and the 2017 Research Study in response to public discussions and concerns over Basic Competency Assessments, and put forward targeted recommendations for improvement.

#### **(5) Review Methods**

3.9 When reviewing the four enhancement initiatives (namely improving the assessment papers and question design; enhancing school reports; strengthening diversified professional support measures; and including a questionnaire survey on

students' learning attitude and motivation) of the 2016 Tryout Study and 2017 Research Study, the Committee collected views and suggestions in the following ways, with a view to providing feedback and facilitating the review of related measures:

(i) Quantitative approach

- Questionnaire surveys/opinion surveys: The target participants were school heads, curriculum leaders, teachers (including teachers from participating schools serving as invigilators and markers), students and parents. The main purpose was to collect stakeholders' views and suggestions on assessment items, reports, various support measures and risks involved.

(ii) Qualitative approach

- Focus groups/interviews: The target participants were school heads, curriculum leaders, teachers (including teachers from participating schools serving as invigilators and markers), students, parents, councils and other relevant groups. The main purpose was to collect stakeholders' views and suggestions on assessment items, reports, various support measures and risks involved.
- Case studies: Four schools participating in the Research Study were invited to provide input into case studies, which aimed to take a more in-depth look at the support measures and risks involved, in a bid to grasp how schools effectively used various support measures to enhance assessment literacy and examine the effectiveness and limitations of the implementation of the Research Study in schools, and to look into the solutions, views and suggestions.

3.10 The evaluation of the 2016 Tryout Study and the 2017 Research Study are set out in Chapter 4 of this report.

## **Chapter 4 Feedback of the 2016 Tryout Study and 2017 Research Study**

### **(1) 2016 Tryout Study**

4.1 The Committee submitted the Report on Review of the Territory-wide System Assessment to the EDB in February 2016 recommending the introduction of the 2016 Tryout Study, and submitted another report on the review of the 2016 Tryout Study in December 2016. Details of the objectives, content and research methods of the 2016 Tryout Study are set out in the Report on 2016 Tryout Study (Primary 3) released in December 2016. The major enhancement measures of the 2016 Tryout Study include:

#### **(I) *Improving Assessment Papers and Question Design***

4.2 In order to reduce drilling induced by TSA and to reflect more clearly the intent of Basic Competency Assessments, the Committee considered that the assessment papers and question design could be adjusted. The directions of adjustments are to:

- (i) uphold the reliability and validity of TSA;
- (ii) align with the requirements of Basic Competencies of Primary 3<sup>12</sup>;
- (iii) tie in with the spirit of the curriculum; and
- (iv) address students' learning needs.

4.3 The major modifications to assessment papers and items include:

- (i) ensuring that the item design is aligned with students' everyday experience and knowledge;
- (ii) reducing the number of passages in the reading papers of Chinese Language and English Language;
- (iii) reducing the number of items in assessment papers of the three subjects of Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics; and
- (iv) improving the items (such as reducing the number of "reverse thinking" and "five-option-choose-two" items in Chinese Language, items expecting answers in the past tense in English Language and "follow-through" items in Mathematics).

Details of the improved assessment papers and question design are set out in Chapter

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<sup>12</sup> The question design of TSA in the early years involved a small number of relatively challenging items to differentiate abilities among students so as to provide schools with more comprehensive information on students' overall performance. The attainment of Basic Competencies would not be affected, even if students were unable to give correct answers to such items.



2 of the Report on 2016 Tryout Study (Primary 3).

4.4 In order for the public and schools to timely grasp and understand the rationale of question design for TSA, instead of following the usual practice of uploading relevant question papers upon the release of TSA results, the HKEAA has, since 2016, uploaded to the website on Basic Competency Assessments<sup>13</sup> the question papers of each subject, the suggested answers together with the information on item design, as well as the marking schemes right after the completion of Primary 3 assessment.

## ***(II) Enhancing School Reports***

4.5 On enhancing the format of school reports, in order to enable schools to make better use of TSA data to benefit learning and teaching, the Committee recommended that four types of school reports with different coverage should be made available for schools' selection to meet the needs of individual schools. The four types of reports are:

- (i) Existing version, which provides school data and territory-wide data;
- (ii) Simplified version, which only provides data of an individual school without territory-wide data for reference purposes;
- (iii) Integrated version, which is a consolidated report on Basic Competencies by item groups and provides exemplars on students' overall performance; and
- (iv) Information analysis report, which provides detailed analysis information of each item (including the corresponding key learning objective, Basic Competency and question intent of each item, as well as an analysis of options of multiple-choice items).

Details of the enhanced school reports are set out in Chapter 2 of the Report on 2016 Tryout Study (Primary 3).

## ***(III) Strengthening Diversified Professional Support Measures***

4.6 Implementing targeted follow-up improvement measures based on the information obtained upon completion of the assessment is an important element of the learning-teaching-assessment process (please see paragraphs 1.1 and 1.2 above for details). To advance schools' understanding of how to use assessment data and information, increase the effectiveness of learning, teaching and assessment, and enhance teachers' assessment literacy under the 2016 Tryout Study, schools could, in the light of school-based needs, opt for one or more of the following professional

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<sup>13</sup> Website on Basic Competency Assessments: [www.bca.hkeaa.edu.hk](http://www.bca.hkeaa.edu.hk)

support measures to help teachers grasp how to use the data effectively. Details are as follows:

(i) Workshops on better use of assessment strategies to enhance learning and teaching

4.7 Workshops on better use of assessment strategies to enhance learning and teaching were organised by the Curriculum Development Institute. In the workshops, while providing concepts, theories and knowledge about “learning, teaching and assessment”, practical experience was also shared in an in-depth manner, enabling teachers to understand how to develop a school-based assessment that meets school-based needs, design an effective assessment task and use assessment data to improve teaching strategies and activities<sup>14</sup>. In addition, the Curriculum Development Institute will continue to enhance the assessment literacy of teachers through professional development courses on curriculum leadership and related subjects.

(ii) School-based support services

4.8 The EDB has been providing school-based support services to schools in the territory to help them enhance the effectiveness of learning and teaching. The EDB encouraged schools participating in the 2016 Tryout Study to apply for on-site support services in the light of their school-based needs. Such support services aimed to enhance assessment literacy of teachers by providing intensive on-site support to schools and helping schools use different data and information for diagnosis.

(iii) Developing learning, teaching and assessment materials in collaboration with tertiary institutions

4.9 Regarding collaboration with tertiary institutions and schools participating in projects in the development of learning, teaching and assessment materials, tertiary institutions and schools collaborated to design learning, teaching and assessment materials and helped teachers understand better the concepts and techniques of designing learning, teaching and assessment materials. Under the projects, schools formed learning communities and had opportunities to learn from and share with each other.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> The EDB conducted Part 1 of the workshops in May and June 2016, which aimed to share with teachers how to make use of assessment strategies to facilitate learning and teaching. Part 2 of the workshops was conducted in December 2016, which focused on how to make optimal use of assessment data to provide feedback to learning and teaching.

<sup>15</sup> The learning, teaching and assessment materials developed are uploaded to the WLTS website (<http://wlts.edb.hkedcity.net/en/home/index.html>).

(iv) Parent education

4.10 The EDB encouraged schools to organise parent education activities to help parents understand Basic Competency Assessments and TSA. These activities aimed to enhance parents' assessment literacy and enable them to grasp a deep understanding of diversified assessments, concepts and functions of assessment, etc, thereby enhancing the perception of assessment among parents and members of the public. The EDB and interested schools co-organised different forms of parent education activities, including onsite workshops and joint-school seminars for parents.

4.11 Details of the various professional support measures are set out in Chapter 2 of the Report on 2016 Tryout Study (Primary 3).

(IV) ***Including a questionnaire survey on learning attitude and motivation***

4.12 To make good use of data and help schools enhance students' learning effectiveness, the 2016 Tryout Study included a questionnaire survey on students' learning attitude and motivation. The questionnaire is divided into three parts for schools, students and parents to participate on a voluntary basis.

4.13 The survey involved an integrated analysis of students' performance in the 2016 Tryout Study and non-academic data, seeking to identify the key factors in students' learning and collect views on TSA. Each participating school received an independent analysis report on its school data. School heads and teachers could identify the factors affecting students' learning attitude and motivation by making reference to the data of the questionnaire survey to improve learning and teaching. Details of the questionnaire survey are set out in Chapter 2 of the Report on 2016 Tryout Study (Primary 3).

(V) ***Other recommendations***

4.14 Apart from the major initiatives mentioned above, the Committee made recommendations on "handling the problem of over-drilling", "removing stakes", "enhancing communication and deepening mutual trust", "enhancing assessment literacy and professional capabilities", "continuously enhancing the effectiveness and value of TSA", etc. in February and December 2016. Details of other recommendations and follow-ups of the Committee are set out in ***Annex 2***.

(2) **2017 Research Study**

4.15 The EDB announced in January 2017 the introduction of the 2017 Research Study, extending the new initiatives for enhancement under the 2016 Tryout Study to all primary schools in the territory in 2017 with a view to collecting more comprehensive feedback. The new initiatives for enhancement included improving

assessment papers and question design, enhancing school reports, strengthening diversified professional support measures and including a questionnaire survey on learning attitude and motivation. All public sector primary schools (i.e. more than 470 schools) and more than 20 private primary schools participated in the 2017 Research Study.

**(I) Progress of the 2017 Research Study**

4.16 The assessments under the 2017 Research Study have been completed smoothly. The first part, which consisted of oral assessments for Chinese Language and English Language and Chinese audio-visual (CAV) assessments for Chinese Language, was conducted by means of random sampling. The HKEAA selected some Primary 3 students to participate in the oral or CAV assessments, which were completed on 4 and 5 May respectively. The second part, which consisted of written assessments for Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics, was completed on 13 and 14 June. The progress of the 2017 Research Study is as follows:

**(i) Improving assessment papers and question design**

4.17 The 2017 Research Study continued to uphold the spirit and direction for modifications of the 2016 Tryout Study in improving assessment papers and question design. Related modifications were implemented in the assessment of the 2017 Research Study.

**(ii) Enhancing school reports**

4.18 The 2016 Tryout Study introduced four types of reports for schools to select in the light of school-based situations. The provision of enhanced reports was extended to the 2017 Research Study. The types of reports chosen by schools participating in the 2017 Research Study are as follows:

	<b>Type of report</b>	<b>Chinese Language</b>	<b>English Language</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>
i	Existing version	97.6%	97.6%	97.6%
ii	Simplified version	1.0%	1.0%	1.0%
iii	Integrated version	96.4%	96.6%	96.6%
iv	Information analysis report	97.4%	97.6%	97.6%

*Note: To enhance schools' use of data to provide feedback to learning and teaching, starting from 2015, schools with five or more than five NCS students taking the Chinese assessment would receive an additional report to provide performance data of NCS students for schools' reference. Schools can, based on these reports, improve their teaching programmes to facilitate students' learning.*

**(iii) Strengthening diversified professional support measures**

4.19 In the 2017/18 school year, the EDB has provided all primary schools in the territory with the service of school-based analysis of school reports to facilitate their

understanding of how to make good use of the enhanced reports, and integrate them with students' internal assessment data in identifying students' learning needs.

4.20 The EDB has been providing all primary schools with holistic professional support. The progress of the professional support measures under the 2017 Research Study are summarised as follows:

Workshops on better use of assessment strategies to enhance learning and teaching

4.21 Regarding workshops on better use of assessment strategies to enhance learning and teaching, the EDB conducted five workshops from May to July 2017, which aimed to share with teachers how to make use of assessment strategies to facilitate learning and teaching. Around 431 teachers from 140 schools participated in these workshops.

School-based support services

4.22 Regarding school-based support services, the support foci for the 2017/18 school year aligned with the curriculum renewal and initiatives, including enhancing assessment literacy. Schools could apply for appropriate support services in the light of their school-based development and students' needs. Having regard to the curriculum development of the participating schools and their students' needs, support officers collaborated with them in areas including curriculum planning, use of diversified learning and teaching strategies, and continuous assessments to strengthen curriculum leadership and enhance the quality of learning and teaching in all key learning areas/subjects. As for learning and assessment, support officers assisted schools in the integrated use of different assessment data to understand students' learning. Teachers' assessment literacy was enhanced through lesson preparation meetings when curriculum planning was conducted, appropriate teaching strategies were designed and diversified assessment methods were used to provide effective feedback to students. In the 2017/18 school year, about 330 primary schools were provided with support services (including learning communities) rendered by the school-based support sections of the EDB in relation to the subjects of Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics.

Developing learning, teaching and assessment materials in collaboration with tertiary institutions

4.23 Regarding collaboration with tertiary institutions and schools participating in the research study in the development of learning, teaching and assessment materials, 56 schools were involved in developing learning, teaching and assessment materials in collaboration with tertiary institutions and trying out the WLTS and STAR platforms. Under this support measure, teachers of schools participating in the 2017 Research Study developed, in collaboration with tertiary institutions and the

EDB, the learning, teaching and assessment materials which tied in with the school-based curriculum. In this way, teachers had a better grasp of the design concept of teaching materials and teaching techniques, and thereby designed quality teaching materials and developed a school-based curriculum to meet students' learning needs.

(iv) Including a questionnaire survey on learning attitude and motivation

4.24 Under the 2017 Research Study, the EDB commissioned the Chinese University of Hong Kong to conduct a questionnaire survey on students' learning attitude and motivation. Over 280 primary schools participated in the questionnaire survey and over 18 000 parent and student questionnaires returned were successfully matched. This survey, with a representative sample, involved an analysis integrating non-academic data with academic performance, and was the largest scale of its kind in the territory. The Chinese University of Hong Kong released the school reports in mid-November and early December. Three briefing sessions were organised to explain to schools how to interpret the information in the school reports.

**(3) Stakeholders' Views**

4.25 The EDB and the Committee have heeded and collected views and recommendations of the education sector and stakeholders through different channels (including focus groups and seminars), and have followed up and reviewed the feedback on the 2016 Tryout Study and the 2017 Research Study.

4.26 For the purpose of reviewing different stakeholders' feedback on Basic Competency Assessments and the enhanced elements, the EDB first implemented a tryout study (50 schools) in 2016 and extended it to all primary schools in the territory (500 primary schools) in 2017 to widely collect frontline experience of implementing the measures. Questionnaire surveys and more than 191 sessions of various types (including focus groups, seminars and meetings) were also conducted to collect views (*Annex 3*), covering school sponsoring bodies of more than 70% of primary schools in the territory, and a total of 315 school heads, their representatives, and over 2 630 teachers from 509 primary schools (including all government, subsidised and Direct Subsidy Scheme primary schools and some private primary schools) and more than 23 000 parents of Primary 3 students. A summary of different stakeholders' views collected under the 2017 Research Study is set out in *Annex 4*. For other stakeholders' views, please refer to the Committee's reports in February and December 2016.

4.27 According to the feedback collected, most stakeholders affirmed TSA's function and importance of providing feedback to learning and teaching at the

territory-wide and school levels. The experience gained from the 2017 Research Study indicated that the enhancement measures effectively alleviated public concerns about over-drilling and risks induced by TSA. Stakeholders affirmed the significance of TSA as follows:

- (i) At the territory-wide level, stakeholders agreed that the Government needed to have assessment information at the system level, including attainment rates, territory-wide percentage of correct responses and analysis of other student groups (students with special educational needs and non-Chinese speaking students), with the aim of grasping Hong Kong students' learning performance in the three subjects of Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics, and evaluating and monitoring Hong Kong's educational standards for formulation of appropriate policies;
- (ii) At the school level, schools needed feedback information to improve learning and teaching. Attaching great importance to the realisation of school-based management, school sponsoring bodies wished to have objective tools and feedback information for them to know how their sponsored schools performed.

4.28 Feedback from different stakeholders on the 2017 Research Study is as follows:

#### School sponsoring bodies

4.29 School sponsoring bodies generally agreed that TSA should be maintained as it served as a set of objective tools for schools to grasp the effectiveness of learning and teaching. Some school sponsoring bodies remarked that without TSA, they would need to develop by themselves a set of assessment tools to review teaching performance and students' levels.

4.30 School sponsoring bodies also generally acknowledged the effectiveness of the enhancement measures under the 2017 Research Study and opined that the Study did not bring any pressure on schools. School sponsoring bodies claimed it was not true to say that they had used TSA data to exert pressure on schools. In fact, school sponsoring bodies sought to see how schools performed in TSA because they wanted to render support to schools in a focused manner to enhance the effectiveness of learning and teaching. In addition, school sponsoring bodies also hoped to encourage schools that had been capable of making effective use of assessment information to improve learning and teaching to share their good experience with other schools under the same sponsoring body. This was completely different from

what had been said about exerting pressure on schools.

4.31 On school reports, many school sponsoring bodies affirmed the enhanced reports' function of providing feedback to learning and teaching. Representatives of school sponsoring bodies recommended that in addition to the current TSA reports on non-Chinese speaking students, reports on students with special educational needs should be provided in addition so that schools could strengthen support for these students.

#### School heads

4.32 School heads generally agreed TSA should be maintained as it served as a set of objective tools for schools to grasp the effectiveness of teaching. Some school heads even considered it necessary for schools that agreed with "assessment for learning" to continue participating in TSA and obtain school reports so as to improve and promote student learning.

4.33 Regarding administrative arrangements, many school heads considered that allowing schools or parents to choose whether to participate in TSA would likely lead to conflicted and diverse views and exert pressure on schools.

4.34 On school reports, many school heads affirmed that the enhanced school reports facilitated the provision of feedback to learning and teaching. Some schools requested that schools be allowed to obtain schools' attainment rates. It was also suggested that school reports be released earlier so that schools would have sufficient time to adjust their curriculum before the commencement of a new school year. Some school heads recommended that in addition to reports for non-Chinese speaking students currently provided by TSA, the reports on students with special educational needs should be provided in addition so that schools could strengthen support for these students.

4.35 In respect of curriculum and professional support, many school heads suggested that the section on assessment in curriculum documents be enhanced, incorporating more concrete suggestions and exemplars with a view to strengthening the sector's grasp of how to make good use of assessment information. It was also suggested that the EDB's support for schools in the enhancement of assessment literacy be strengthened so that schools could make good use of data to fully grasp students' learning and development.



4.36 Many school heads considered that the questionnaire survey on non-academic data enabled schools to learn about their actual circumstances from multiple perspectives and adopt a broader approach, thereby helping them to formulate appropriate policies and conduct further studies. There were also views that publicity should be stepped up in the hope that school sponsoring bodies and schools would learn how to make good use of such data and enhance the culture of using data.

#### Teachers

4.37 Overall, most teachers acknowledged the effectiveness of the enhancement measures under the 2017 Research Study and opined that the Study did not exert pressure on schools.

*Assessment papers and items are aligned with Basic Competencies and extra drilling is not required*

4.38 Most teachers had a positive response to the item design of the 2017 Research Study. They considered that the items were aligned with the Basic Competencies, relevant to students' life experience, suitable for Primary 3 students' level and the duration of assessment and length of passages were suitable so extra drilling was not required. The consolidated views of teachers on the items of each subject are set out in **Annex 5**.

4.39 The HKEAA also conducted questionnaire surveys at the seminars to collect the views of the schools participating in the 2017 Research Study and other schools on the assessment papers and item design. Survey data reflected teachers generally found that the improved assessment papers and question design were aligned with the requirements of Basic Competencies of Primary 3, in line with the spirit of curriculum and appropriate to students' learning needs.

*Enhanced reports facilitate feedback provision and reduce teachers' workload*

4.40 Schools participating in the 2017 Research Study might, in the light of school-based needs and on a subject basis (Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics), choose the reports that they considered appropriate in helping them analyse the performance of students. Teachers reflected that the data provided in the reports, when integrated with the descriptions and exemplars of students' performance in the 2017 TSA Report on the Basic Competencies uploaded to the HKEAA website, could effectively help them understand the learning progress of their students..

4.41 Teachers generally acknowledged the positive role of assessment reports in providing feedback to learning and teaching. The enhanced school reports could meet the needs of different schools on the whole. Schools and teachers might, according to subject-based characteristics, flexibly select appropriate assessment reports to serve different purposes<sup>16</sup>. Among the four types of reports, the information analysis report was most popular. Analysis of wrong answers in the information analysis report helped teachers identify students' strengths and weaknesses. The report also eased teachers' workload in analysing TSA data. In view of teachers' positive comments, the provision of the information analysis report was extended to Primary 6 and Secondary 3 TSAs in 2017. A summary of teachers' views on the school reports is at **Annex 5**.

4.42 The HKEAA also conducted questionnaire surveys at the seminars to collect the views of the schools participating in the 2017 Research Study and other schools on the assessment papers and enhanced school reports. The survey data revealed teachers generally agreed that the enhanced school reports provided more information to inform learning and teaching, and provided consolidated information to facilitate communication between schools and different stakeholders.

### Parents

#### *Simple items cause students no stress*

4.43 Parents generally considered that the adjusted TSA was easily manageable for their children, and that the assessment part of the 2017 Research Study had not exerted pressure on their children. Most parents trusted schools, indicating that schools had not over-drilled students for TSA. Having learned more about TSA and the 2017 Research Study, some parents changed their perceptions of TSA and the 2017 Research Study, and they no longer opposed their children's participation in the assessment. Some parents also revealed that their children found TSA easy.

#### *TSA is not the main source of pressure in learning*

4.44 As shown by a questionnaire survey for focus groups of parents, before the assessment, over 60% of the parents considered the assessment "easy" or "very easy", and after the assessment, 90% of the parents considered the assessment "easy" or "very easy". As for the main source of pressure in learning, about 65% of the parents viewed that it primarily came from school examinations, dictations, tests and homework. Almost 20% of the parents opined that pressure was brought about by the competitive climate in society. Just nearly 3% of the parents considered that

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<sup>16</sup> The different purposes include reviewing the design of school-based assessments, facilitating curriculum planning, adjusting teaching strategies and rendering learning support.

TSA was a source of pressure in learning.

*Affirming school reports' function of provision of feedback*

4.45 Regarding school reports, many parents agreed that such reports were of great referential value to teachers in adjusting teaching strategies. In particular, they acknowledged the benefits of the information analysis report to schools. Meanwhile, some parents considered that data at the school and territory-wide levels provided in the school reports enabled schools to see more clearly how students' performance differed from that of other students in the territory, thereby identifying the strengths and weaknesses of students. Besides, the enhanced reports helped reduce the workload of teachers. Some parents suggested that school reports on students with special educational needs be compiled so that schools could render support accordingly. In addition, many parents recommended that in further enhancing TSA arrangements, consideration should be given to whether parents could be provided with information on their children's performance in TSA so that they would support their children's learning.

## **Chapter 5 Vision of and Recommendations on the Development of Basic Competency Assessments**

5.1 Throughout the entire review of Basic Competency Assessments that took more than two years, the Committee had adhered to the following core values and adopted a professional-led approach to ensuring that the review was premised on the promotion of quality education:

- learning needs of students;
- professionalism; and
- mutual trust among stakeholders.

### **(1) Enhancement Measures to Effectively Establish “Basic Competency Assessments” as “Assessment for Learning”**

5.2 The Committee considers the 2016 Tryout Study and the 2017 Research Study inspiring studies which provided valuable frontline implementation experience for the development of Basic Competency Assessments. Various types of enhancement were implemented and different stakeholders were widely consulted, serving as references for mapping out the direction for the development of TSA.

5.3 The consolidated views of different stakeholders and the experience of the 2016 Tryout Study and the 2017 Research Study reflect that:

- (i) The four major enhancement measures recommended by the Committee (improving assessment papers and question design; enhancing school reports; strengthening professional support; and including a questionnaire survey on students’ learning attitude and motivation) have, in a targeted manner, removed the incentives for drilling induced by TSA and alleviated the society’s concerns about the risks of TSA:

#### **Drilling:**

- ✓ Assessment papers and question design are improved to align with the Basic Competencies of Primary 3 which are already covered in daily teaching so additional drilling is not necessary.
- ✓ The questions are uploaded on the same day after the completion of the assessment to facilitate the public’s understanding that the assessment papers and questions of TSA are aligned with the Basic Competencies of Primary 3 and not overly difficult. Therefore, there is no need to purchase additional supplementary exercises.

Risks:

- ✓ The EDB strengthens internal guidelines to point out explicitly that the EDB does not use TSA data to assess the performance of schools.
  - ✓ TSA has been removed from the Performance Indicators for Schools to emphasise its functions on promoting assessment for learning in order to alleviate schools' concerns about possible risks brought by assessment data.
- (ii) The enhancement measures can effectively direct TSA back on the right track, reflecting both the original intent of TSA as serving the prime objective of providing feedback to learning and teaching and the low-stake nature of TSA as an assessment tool.

5.4 In view of the effectiveness of the enhancement measures, the Committee recommends that relevant **enhancement measures be implemented on a regular basis**, which include continuing to monitor closely the stability of questions and provide enhanced school reports by the HKEAA, and continuing to strengthen professional support for schools and conduct a questionnaire survey on students' learning attitude and motivation by the EDB.

**(2) Recommendations on the Development of Basic Competency Assessments**

5.5 In its previous reports, the Committee has already mentioned that **simply** changing the administrative arrangements for TSA could not address concerns about drilling and risks induced. From the perspective of the education profession, the Committee considered that the aforementioned enhancement measures could effectively address drilling and risks induced by TSA, and reaffirmed the positioning of TSA in promoting “assessment for learning”.

5.6 As “assessment for learning” is a major component of the local curriculum framework and in line with the spirit of school-based management (details are set out in Chapter 1), the Committee considers it necessary to continue to provide reliable and valid information at both the territory-wide and school levels, with a view to reviewing school-based curriculum and arrangements for providing feedback to teaching, and hence enhancing continuously the effectiveness of quality education in Hong Kong.

**(I) Arrangements for TSA in 2018 and beyond**

5.7 In view of the aforementioned positive feedback on the enhancement measures from stakeholders in the education sector and the participation in the 2017 Research Study<sup>17</sup>, TSA may, if considered only from the perspective of the education profession, continue to be implemented in the mode adopted in 2017. Parents who are unwilling to let their children participate in TSA may decide on their own whether their children will participate in it. However, the Committee is aware that when considering the arrangements for TSA in 2018 and beyond, the Government must simultaneously take into account the community's understanding of TSA, the different pace among schools' development in the use of assessment information to improve learning and teaching, and perceptions of some members of the community on the existing arrangements. Therefore, the Committee proposes the following direction for the EDB's consideration:

Selecting students to participate in the annual Primary 3 TSA by sampling

5.8 During the entire review of TSA, the Committee did not receive any opposition to the collection of information at the territory-wide level by the Government. On the contrary, some stakeholders considered it necessary to have an objective and effective assessment tool which provides reliable and valid information to facilitate the Government's understanding of students' learning performance in the three subjects of Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics, which would also serve as a reference for the Government to understand and monitor the educational standard of schools, review related education policies, provide resources and set directions for support and training.

5.9 While the EDB has endeavoured to alleviate schools' concerns about TSA and school sponsoring bodies have expressed that they have not used TSA data to exert pressure on schools, some are still concerned about the issue of exerting pressure. Obviously, this is not an argument about facts but a matter of confidence. To further enhance the confidence of the education sector, the EDB can separately handle the arrangements at the territory-wide and school levels. **If only feedback at the territory-wide level is to be collected, the Committee recommends to conduct TSA on a sampling basis.**

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<sup>17</sup> Apart from government and Direct Subsidy Scheme schools, over 20 private schools participated in the 2017 Research Study on a voluntary basis. While some parents' groups called for a boycott of the assessment, the overall participation rate of the 2017 Research Study was only slightly lower than that of the previous Primary 3 TSA.

5.10 As for the sampling method, the Committee understands that different approaches may serve different purposes. At the same time, different sampling methods may lead to different levels of limitations on the information obtained. In principle, the higher the sampling ratio, the smaller the error and the more information can be obtained. While ensuring that the sampling method can maintain a certain degree of accuracy and enable the Government to obtain information of reference value at the territory-wide level (including territory-wide attainment rate, territory-wide percentage of correct responses and analysis of different groups of students), the Committee also has to balance the views of different stakeholders, consider the community's perceptions and uphold the principle of fairness.

5.11 Taking into account the HKEAA's estimation and analysis, and making reference to the arrangements of large-scale international assessments in various countries/regions and experts' advice, the Committee recommends that individual students be taken as sampling units of Primary 3 TSA, the participation of all schools will be compulsory and the participation of selected students will be compulsory. Students' performance will be counted at the territory-wide level for the EDB's and the community's reference.

5.12 After discussing thoroughly different sampling methods and ratios, the Committee considers that the territory-wide information (including territory-wide attainment rate, territory-wide percentage of correct responses and analysis of different groups of students (including students with special educational needs and non-Chinese speaking students)) should maintain a certain degree of representativeness, so **about 10% of Primary 3 students will be sampled from each school for the assessment each year.** In addition, **to understand the overall learning performance of non-Chinese speaking students and students with special educational needs** and provide appropriate support, **a certain number of students from these two student groups have to be separately sampled to meet the statistical requirements.** Students' performance will only be counted as territory-wide data. Since only a small number of students in each school will participate in the assessment, **school reports will not be provided.** The arrangements for sub-papers<sup>18</sup> in TSA and other general situations have been considered in this regard.

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<sup>18</sup> In TSA, there are sub-papers under each subject to cover different Basic Competency descriptors, and students only need to complete one of the sub-papers.

Arrangements by the HKEAA for schools which would like all their Primary 3 students to participate in TSA and obtain school reports

5.13 The introduction of Basic Competency Assessments puts into action the concept of “assessment for learning”, an important element of the existing curriculum framework in Hong Kong. School-level feedback, in particular, is the cornerstone of continuous improvements in schools’ arrangements for teaching. The views collected during the review process in the past two years reflect that schools acknowledge the useful functions of school-level feedback in reviewing curriculum planning and arrangements for teaching.

5.14 Based on the experience of the 2017 Research Study and the views of school sponsoring bodies, school heads and teachers at meetings or focus groups, schools agree that TSA school reports provide useful information that enables schools to identify the strengths and weaknesses of students and thus enhance curriculum planning. By taking account of both relevant data and schools’ development needs, teachers can formulate plans to improve the effectiveness of learning and teaching. There are also views that with a different cohort of students taking Primary 3 TSA each year, the Government’s provision of school-level information every year could enable schools to take timely follow-up actions to inform learning and teaching.

5.15 In the review, the education sector generally agrees with the concept of assessment for learning. A considerable number of schools would like their Primary 3 students to participate in TSA and obtain detailed school reports so that they can draw reference from the analysis to improve learning and teaching in a focused manner. Therefore the Committee recommends that **the HKEAA should cater for the needs of these schools and make arrangements to enable all Primary 3 students to participate in the assessment and to provide school reports.** Schools with such plans may approach the HKEAA directly. The HKEAA will make relevant arrangements and issue school reports to schools directly. **The EDB will not obtain school reports of individual schools from the HKEAA.**

5.16 Realising the different pace among schools’ development in the use of assessment data and assessment literacy, the Committee recommends that with corresponding initiatives and professional support measures in place, the Government will not be provided with school reports of individual schools to make the objective of TSA in promoting “assessment for learning” at the school level clearer. The Committee also hopes that this will further increase schools’ confidence in TSA.



**(II) Other recommendations**

5.17 In addition to recommending the arrangements for 2018, the Committee noted during the entire review that there is an urgent need to enhance the assessment literacy of the education sector and the community. Other recommendations for enhancing assessment literacy are set out below:

Enhancing the assessment literacy of schools and teachers and their abilities to make good use of assessment information

5.18 It was indicated at the focus groups that the education sector's understanding and grasp of assessment had to be enhanced. It is recommended that the EDB has to continue to strengthen training for serving and newly recruited teachers, e.g. referring to good examples provided in the section on assessment in curriculum documents to help teachers better understand the concepts and implementation of assessment. The Committee agrees that it is necessary to continuously enhance the assessment literacy of schools and teachers, including strengthening focus inspections and school-based support services relating to assessment literacy, gathering schools' good experience in and examples on the effective use of assessment data, and systematically organising workshops on better use of assessment strategies to enhance learning and teaching. These initiatives are conducive to the continuous enhancement of the education sector's assessment literacy. In addition, discussions with teacher training institutions will also be held to further enhance the assessment literacy of pre-service teachers, including making use of assessment results to help students achieve better learning outcomes.

5.19 To cater for the needs of different schools, the Committee recommends that further school-level feedback information be made available for schools' selection, such as schools' attainment rates, reports on the performance of students with special educational needs (reference could be made to the practice of the existing reports on the performance of non-Chinese speaking students, and that a school should have five or more students with special educational needs to participate in TSA), etc.

Strengthening support for schools

5.20 Under the concept of "assessment for learning", follow-up work after assessment is an important part of the entire assessment system. TSA could benefit learning mainly because feedback provided by the assessment reports enables schools to take appropriate follow-up actions, make use of/apply for appropriate support services as necessary and thus enhance the effectiveness of learning and teaching. Over the years, the EDB has been providing schools with support in various forms,

including school-based support services and workshops to promote assessment for learning. In this connection, the Committee considers it necessary to continuously strengthen support in the enhancement of assessment literacy of schools and teachers, including strengthening professional support relating to assessment literacy, gathering schools' good experience in and examples on the effective use of assessment data, and systematically organising workshops on better use of assessment strategies to enhance learning and teaching. These initiatives are conducive to the continuous enhancement of the education sector's assessment literacy. School sponsoring bodies may also apply for the Quality Education Fund to render support to schools at different levels using an evidence-based approach to raising students' standards in languages and Mathematics.

#### Continuing the development of quality online learning-teaching-assessment resources

5.21 The Committee considers it necessary to continue developing quality online learning-teaching-assessment resources, including enhancing the WLTS and STAR platforms, intensifying pilot projects on student adaptive learning to help schools cater for learner diversity, and providing learning and teaching materials appropriate to the learning progress of individual students to facilitate their self-learning.

#### Exploring greater transparency of students' performance data

5.22 In response to the views repeatedly reflected by parents in focus groups, the Committee considers that in enhancing the arrangements for TSA further, ways to respond to parents' requests for information on students' performance in TSA should also be explored.

#### Encouraging schools to organise parent education activities

5.23 To enhance parents' assessment literacy and deepen their understanding of "assessment for learning", the Committee considers that schools should step up efforts on seminars/talks for parents on assessment literacy/school-based assessment policies to deepen mutual understanding and trust, and enable parents to understand better how to make good use of assessment to help their children learn effectively.

#### Fostering assessment literacy of the community

5.24 The Committee recommends that public education be strengthened by disseminating information on TSA and assessment literacy through different channels to enable the public to acquire an understanding of the concept of assessment for learning and further deepen mutual trust among stakeholders.

### **(3) Conclusion**

5.25 As part of the education reform, “assessment for learning” and “Basic Competency Assessments” aim at promoting student-oriented education, and encouraging schools to understand students’ performance, follow up students’ learning in a focused manner and eliminate mechanical drills and rote learning. These aims are entirely consistent with society’s long-standing beliefs that students should develop their potential to the full and the drilling culture should be eradicated.

5.26 The Committee has to state clearly that rather than as an incentive for drilling, “assessment for learning” is a realisation of “assessment for providing feedback to learning and teaching”. An optimum use of TSA data can effectively help schools follow up and facilitate students’ learning in a focused manner and eliminate aimless drilling. Attributing the drilling culture simply to TSA, whether this is based on the misunderstanding that “assessment is equivalent to drilling” or on the traditional notion that “assessment is used for ranking”, reflects the inability to grasp TSA’s nature as “a low-stake assessment with emphasis on feedback” and the failure to focus on the crux of the matter instead of minor issues. This is not conducive to the cultivation of a good learning environment for students to develop potential and receive quality basic education. The Committee considers that after the implementation of the new arrangements, it is necessary to closely observe the response of the education sector and the community and make adjustments as appropriate to address the needs in respect of professional development.

**Public Concerns and Enhancement of the Territory-wide System Assessment**

1. Since the introduction of the Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA) in 2004 (Primary 3, Primary 6<sup>19</sup> and Secondary 3 TSAs were implemented since 2004, 2005 and 2006 respectively), the Education Bureau (EDB) has been maintaining communication with various stakeholders (including schools, teachers, parents, primary and secondary school councils, the Committee on Home-School Co-operation and the TSA Concern Group) to understand the implementation situation.
2. In a questionnaire survey conducted by the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) in May 2008, 96% of the responded schools indicated that their teachers had made reference to TSA data in enhancing teaching plans<sup>20</sup>. Notwithstanding the low-stake nature of TSA, there have been voices that TSA has exerted great pressure on Primary 6 students because they have to sit for internal school examinations, TSA and Pre-Secondary One Hong Kong Attainment Test (Pre-S1 HKAT) within weeks in June and July.
3. To lessen the pressure on Primary 6 students and to preserve the core functions of Pre-S1 HKAT and TSA, the EDB set up an ad-hoc working group in November 2010 to review the arrangements for Primary 6 assessments. Upon considering the recommendations of the ad-hoc working group, the EDB announced in November 2011 that Primary 6 TSA would be suspended in 2012 and 2014 while Pre-S1 HKAT would be suspended in 2013. In the years with suspension of Primary 6 TSA, schools could opt to participate in Primary 6 assessment on a voluntary basis. Meanwhile, the EDB undertook to review TSA, including its implementation arrangements, reporting functions, assessment coverage and items.
4. To gauge the views of various stakeholders on TSA arrangements, the HKEAA

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<sup>19</sup> Since 2014, the Primary 6 TSA has been implemented in odd-numbered years (i.e. 2015, 2017 and so on).

<sup>20</sup> Most teachers found the school reports useful for analysing students' performance. They agreed that TSA could serve as an objective system for schools to identify areas where their students were faring relatively well and areas where further improvements could be made, including seeking professional support, additional resources or adjustment in curriculum planning. However, there were variations in the depth of TSA data analysis and follow-up measures among schools. In some schools, teachers were still inclined to drill students with practice papers and supplementary exercises. Some other schools even used TSA as a model for designing learning tasks, homework, tests or examination papers.

conducted five focus group meetings in end-2012<sup>21</sup>. The EDB also met representatives of various stakeholders in 2013<sup>22</sup>. In addition, nine focus group meetings were conducted by the HKEAA in September 2013 to meet heads and deputy heads of primary and secondary schools, primary school curriculum leaders, panel heads and subject teachers.

5. Upon considering the views of various stakeholders, the EDB, in striking a balance between preserving the core functions of TSA and lessening the pressure on teachers and students, put forward a number of recommendations for TSA enhancement in 2014, which included:

- (i) Not disclosing attainment rates of students' Basic Competencies in Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics to individual primary schools;
- (ii) Removing TSA from the Key Performance Measures for primary schools;
- (iii) Continuing with the alternate-year arrangement for Primary 6 TSA and Pre-S1 HKAT (i.e. conducting Primary 6 TSA in odd-numbered years and Pre-S1 HKAT in even-numbered years) while retaining the current implementation arrangements for Primary 3 and Secondary 3 TSAs; and
- (iv) Enhancing TSA's reporting functions in phases and providing a more interactive platform for reporting.

6. Some schools opined that the series of enhancement measures (including not disclosing attainment rates to individual primary schools, removing TSA from the Key Performance Measures for primary schools, continuing with the implementation of Primary 6 TSA in alternate years and enhancing TSA's reporting functions in phases) introduced by the EDB in 2014 enabled TSA to strike a balance between preserving the core functions of TSA and lessening the pressure on students and teachers. Details have been set out in discussion paper no. CB(4)284/13-14(03) of the Legislative Council.

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<sup>21</sup> Most participants found relief in both workload and pressure because they could focus on either Primary 6 TSA or Pre-S1 HKAT in a particular school year. Schools voluntarily taking part in Primary 6 assessment in 2012 remarked that they always attached great importance to the item analysis reports and considered the data useful for understanding students' learning needs and supporting curriculum planning. Schools generally considered the existing arrangements (i.e. Primary 6 TSA in alternate years plus opt-in arrangement) acceptable.

<sup>22</sup> The representatives were mainly from primary and secondary school councils, the Committee on Home-School Co-operation, the Federation of Parent-Teacher Associations, the Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union, the Education Commission, the Curriculum Development Council, and the TSA Concern Group.

**Follow-up to the Recommendations in the Committee's Reports**

**(1) Follow-up to the Recommendations in the Committee's Reports in February 2016<sup>23</sup>**

***(I) Short-term Recommendations***

<b>Recommendations (Original text)</b>	<b>Progress</b>	<b>Follow-ups</b>
<p>6.7 On paper and question design, major recommendations of the Committee include:</p> <p>(i) <u>Principles of modification:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- learning needs of students</li> <li>- lessening the learning burden on students</li> <li>- aligning with the spirit of curriculum</li> <li>- adopting appropriate words and phrases in assessment materials</li> </ul> <p>(ii) <u>Primary 3 Chinese Language:</u></p> <p>Reading Assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The number of texts will be adjusted from three to two, and the total number of words of the texts per sub-paper will be limited to not more than 1 200.</li> <li>- Practical writing will only be included in one of the sub-papers to avoid giving undue weight to practical writing.</li> <li>- The number of items will not exceed 20.</li> </ul> <p>Writing Assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Assessment content: To discourage drilling on format, certain information required for practical writing will be provided, such as salutation, complimentary close, greetings and date of a letter.</li> <li>- Marking criteria: The marking criteria on the format of practical writing will be adjusted. Student</li> </ul>	Completed	<p>1. Under the 2016 Tryout Study, adjustments were made with regard to the direction and spirit of the assessment papers and question design (including aligning with the requirements of Basic Competencies of Primary 3 students, tying in with the spirit of the curriculum, addressing students' learning needs, and adjusting the number of texts, number of items, number of words, etc.).</p> <p>2. Related adjustments received positive feedback in the 2016 Tryout Study. It was considered that such adjustments could effectively eliminate the incentives for over-drilling, so they continued to be adopted in 2017 and beyond.</p>

<sup>23</sup> The recommendations are quoted from the "Report on Review of the Territory-wide System Assessment" in February 2016.

<p>exemplars demonstrating the attainment of basic competency will be provided.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Answer sheet: The number of squares for writing will be reduced to 400.</li> </ul> <p>Others:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Items with low correct response rates in each paper will be sorted out to identify the causes of unsatisfactory performance, e.g. poor descriptions of item stems. The observations could serve as reference for item setting in future.</li> <li>- A review of five-options-choose-two items, items requiring reverse thinking and so forth in each paper will be conducted to analyse how such item types affect students' performance and to form the basis for adjustments.</li> </ul> <p>(iii) <u>Primary 3 English Language:</u>  <i>Paper layout:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Paper layout will be improved. For example, a text will be placed alongside relevant questions and the number of pages will be kept to a minimum to make it more convenient for students to write their answers.</li> <li>- To help students manage the assessment time for the reading and writing paper, invigilators will announce the time twice during the examination, i.e. 15 minutes and 5 minutes before the end of examination.</li> <li>- To shorten the length of the reading paper and ease the reading burden on students, the number of parts will be reduced from four to three, the number of words per reading task will be limited to not more than 150, and the number of</li> </ul>		
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<p>words of the whole paper will be capped at 400. There will be around 20 to 24 items in each sub-paper, with around 40 items in total, to ensure the reliability and validity of the assessment.</p> <p>- Assessment items on basic book concepts should be avoided to minimise drilling.</p> <p><i>Item design:</i></p> <p>-Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The text types and contexts should be familiar to students.</li> <li>● Options of multiple-choice items should be simple and straightforward.</li> <li>● Students should not be required to apply their numeracy skills in the reading paper.</li> </ul> <p>-Writing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Items expecting answers in the past tense will be scrapped, such as writing a recount. Items on picture-aided storytelling will be retained because students could use either the present tense or the past tense.</li> <li>● For items on picture-aided storytelling, more hints can be given on the vocabulary relevant to each picture while allowing ample room for creativity.</li> </ul> <p>(iv) <u>Primary 3 Mathematics:</u> Modifications to content:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Only one Basic Competency will be assessed in each item.</li> <li>● Distractors in multiple-choice items should align with Basic Competencies.</li> <li>● Items requiring students to solve linking problems should be minimised. Without linked sub-questions, the</li> </ul>		
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<p>marking criteria should be adjusted as appropriate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The number of items will be reduced, with an immediate cut of around 20%.</li> <li>● Each paper should have a variety of item types to avoid giving undue weight to a particular item type.</li> <li>● The Moderation Group should set the assessment items with the context familiar to students. For example, items about exchanges between large-denomination banknotes and coins should be avoided.</li> </ul>		
<p>6.8 The Committee has made the following recommendations:</p> <p>(i) <u>Over-drilling</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- to refine TSA papers and item design to align better with the requirements of basic competencies and tie in with schools' everyday teaching and students' learning needs. In this way, the need for schools and students to prepare for TSA by drilling will be eliminated, enhancing learning and teaching, minimising impact on the balanced and whole-person development;</li> </ul>	Completed	<p>3. See paragraphs 1-2 above for the follow-ups.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- through enhancing training of teaching staff at different stages (including training for prospective teachers, pre-service training for appointed teachers, and in-service training for serving teachers), to enable them to get acquainted with curriculum arrangements, teaching methods and teaching resources, and to promote the assessment literacy and the understanding that over-drilling is not an effective way to benefit learning; and</li> </ul>	Ongoing	<p>4. There is coordination between the Education Bureau (EDB) and tertiary institutions to include contents on assessment literacy in teacher training programmes in tertiary institutions to enhance the training of prospective teachers.</p> <p>5. The EDB has included contents on assessment literacy and Basic Competency Assessments in 4 sessions of the Induction Course for New Teachers (primary and secondary schools) in August 2016 and August 2017.</p>

		<p>6. The EDB supports schools and provides training to serving teachers through professional development programmes such as workshops on effective use of assessment strategies to promote learning and teaching, school-based support services and projects in collaboration with tertiary institutions as well as other seminars and workshops.</p>
<p>- to strengthen communication among the EDB, school sponsoring bodies, schools, parents, students and different stakeholders in the education sector in order to promote understanding and support of the schools' arrangements on homework, exercises and tests/examinations.</p>	Ongoing	<p>7. Starting from January 2017, the EDB has held 10 seminars for school managers and schools, etc. to maintain good communication with various stakeholders.</p> <p>8. The EDB, in collaboration with Federations of Parent-Teacher Associations (FPTAs), organised training seminars in the 18 districts to introduce and share related concepts and school experiences with school managers, school heads, teachers in charge of parent education and the chairman and members of the school's Parent-Teacher Association (PTA).</p> <p>9. The EDB has developed a resource kit for promoting "assessment for learning" to enhance the understanding of different stakeholders, including school management and parents, on "assessment for learning" and Basic Competency Assessments. Schools can also refer to the kit when organising Parents' Days, school activities and seminars to let various stakeholders understand how to make good use of assessment data to provide feedback to learning and teaching to enhance the effectiveness of student learning.</p>

		<p>10. The EDB has reminded schools to disseminate relevant policies and maintain close communication with parents through different channels like school webpages and PTA seminars so as to continue to regularly review school-based policies and measures, including homework policies, assessment arrangements, life-wide learning activities / extra-curricular activities to align with students' needs, interests and abilities. Through diversified learning experiences, students can learn effectively, have enough space to rest and establish healthy lifestyles. Under the principle of transparent and effective communication, the EDB encourages parents to maintain good communication with schools and express their opinions directly to schools so that schools can respond more effectively to parents' views and appeals on homework arrangements.</p>
<p>(ii) <u>Stakeholders' perception of the stakes involved in TSA</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- EDB to reassure the education sector of the low-stake design of TSA. Specific internal guidelines should be issued to explicitly state that EDB will not use TSA data to assess the performance of a school (e.g. External School Review). From the 2016/17 school year, TSA would be removed from the focus questions under "8.1 Academic Performance" of the "Performance Indicators" to alleviate schools' concerns. In addition, schools' effective use of TSA data to provide feedback to learning and teaching should be further</li> </ul>	Completed	<p>11. The EDB has strengthened internal guidelines to make it clear that the EDB would not use TSA data to assess schools' performance.</p> <p>12. To further remove the risk of TSA and deepen mutual trust, the EDB has strengthened internal guidelines to provide clear guidelines on the use of TSA data and information by various sections of the EDB (details are set out on page 16 of the review report in December 2016).</p>

emphasised under “3.3 Performance Assessment”; and		
- to step up public education and promote assessment literacy to encourage the public and the education sector for cultivating a positive and right attitude towards the application of assessment data to serve the function of “assessment for learning”.	Ongoing	13. The EDB enhances public understanding of “assessment for learning” through channels such as Facebook, Youtube, Learning and Teaching Expo, etc.
(iii) <u>Strengthening support for learning</u> - to organise seminars and workshops for different stakeholders in school;	Completed	14. See paragraphs 7-10 above for the follow-ups.
- to encourage experience sharing among schools on the use of TSA data to enhance the curriculum and enrich teaching activities;	Ongoing	15. A project with the theme “Assessment for Learning” has been set up by the Quality Education Fund Thematic Networks, which consists of three core schools and about nine network schools, sharing successful experiences in the use of assessment to promote learning and teaching.
- to further promote the use of WLTS (including exercises, teaching activities and materials that are specifically designed on the basis of TSA data) to support and promote learning and teaching; and	Ongoing	16. The EDB promoted the online platform in the 2016 Tryout Study and the 2017 Research Study to let schools try out Student Assessment Repository (STAR) and Web-based Learning and Teaching Support (WLTS). A total of 255 schools participated in the tryouts.  17. Hong Kong Education City organised 5 briefing sessions on STAR in October and November 2016 to promote the online platform to teachers.
- to conduct consultancy studies and visits to learn more about the relevant practices in other places, particularly their approaches in using assessment data for devising measures to support teaching in school and student	Ongoing	18. In July 2016, representatives of the Committee and the EDB participated in the Four-Region Free Trade Area across the Strait Assessment Conference to learn about the assessment experiences in the Mainland, Hong Kong and Macau.

learning; and		
- to provide effective support to schools.	Ongoing	19. See paragraph 6 above.
(iv) <u>Enhancing transparency and strengthening communication with parents</u> - EDB to disseminate TSA-related information through various channels to enhance transparency and strengthen communication with parents, helping them to understand the purpose, implementation and function of TSA.	Ongoing	20. In order to enhance transparency and allow the public to grasp and understand the rationale of question design for Primary 3 assessment under the 2017 Research Study, the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) followed the practice of the 2016 Tryout Study and uploaded the question papers of Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics, suggested answers together with the information on item design (e.g. the corresponding key learning objective, Basic Competency and question intent), as well as the marking schemes to the website on Basic Competency Assessments right after the completion of Primary 3 assessment in 2017.  21. See paragraphs 7-10 above for the follow-ups.

## ***(II) Medium and Long-term Recommendations***

<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Progress</b>	<b>Follow-ups</b>
(i) to enhance the overall assessment literacy among various sectors, including understanding assessment as an integral part of learning and teaching, knowing the functions of daily exercises, schools' internal examinations, public examinations and assessment studies; enhancing the capacities of making use of assessment data to provide feedback to learning and teaching and to develop and enhance the	Ongoing	22. The EDB and the Committee have attached great importance to the views of different stakeholders in the review. Therefore, starting from 2015, the EDB has arranged 191 meetings or seminars to continuously meet with various stakeholders, including school heads, frontline teachers, parents, parent-teacher associations and parent concern groups, etc. In addition, the EDB also

school-based curriculum and learning activities; as well as strengthening the communication and collaboration among various sectors, such as:		introduced the review work of TSA at the invitation of a number of consultation bodies. A list of meetings between the EDB and different parties is at <i>Annex 3</i> .
- for school sponsoring bodies, incorporated management committee members, EDB visiting officers: promoting among them the understanding that the TSA data reflect and assess only part of the learning objectives, and student and school backgrounds should be taken into account in the relevant analysis;	Ongoing	23. See paragraph 7 above for the follow-ups.
- for principals (including aspiring principals and newly-appointed principals): promoting among them the understanding of using TSA information for leading the school in enhancing learning and teaching;	Ongoing	24. The EDB conducted a seminar in November 2017 for new school heads to facilitate their understanding of “assessment for learning”.
- for curriculum leaders and teachers: promoting among them the understanding of using TSA information for planning curriculum, enhancing curriculum leadership and providing feedback to learning and teaching;	Ongoing	25. The EDB conducted a seminar in December 2017 for curriculum leaders and teachers to facilitate their understanding of “assessment for learning”.  26. The EDB had contacted the Education University of Hong Kong to run a five-day professional development programme in the 2017-18 school year to enhance serving teachers’ assessment literacy.
- for prospective teachers: equipping them with the understanding of the design concept and implementation of TSA as well as the knowledge of assessment for learning;	Ongoing	27. See paragraph 4 above for the follow-ups.
- for parents: promoting among them the understanding of the concept	Ongoing	28. See paragraph 8 above for the follow-ups.

of assessment for learning, strengthening home-school co-operation and communication for better understanding of their children's learning needs; and		
- for HKEAA officers: promoting assessment for learning through enhancing assessment items and reports.	Ongoing	<p>29. According to the direction and principles recommended by the Committee, the HKEAA, through different groups and stringent mechanisms, enhanced assessment design, trimmed down the length and quantity of the assessment contents. The assessment items are also aligned with Basic Competencies. The overall feedback was positive.</p> <p>30. The HKEAA has newly developed three different types of school reports, each of which contains data and information on different contents to facilitate teachers' analysis and understanding of students' performance. These reports have also been extended to Primary 6 and Secondary 3. Schools thought that the information analysis report provided sufficient data and diagnostic information to review students' performance, facilitated teaching and reduced teachers' workload in analysing data.</p>
(ii) in the long run, to review the overall arrangements for basic competency assessment and the formulation of basic competencies, and to continue to draw reference from the assessment practices in other places;	Ongoing	31. The Committee will continuously review BCA and the formulation of Basic Competencies and will continue to make reference to the arrangements and development of system assessments or related assessments in other districts.
(iii) to expand the existing central online assessment bank "Student Assessment" to cater for everyday learning and teaching as well as assessment;	Ongoing	<p>32. The EDB will continue to enhance the STAR and WLTS platforms.</p> <p>33. The EDB will examine intensifying related pilot projects on student adaptive learning,</p>

		helping schools cater for learner diversity, and providing learning and teaching materials appropriate to the learning progress of individual students to facilitate their self-learning.
(iv) to further promote professional development among schools, and to share successful experiences in making good use of assessment to benefit learning and teaching through the Quality Education Fund Thematic Networks;	Ongoing	34. See paragraph 15 above for the follow-ups.
(v) to review the arrangements of basic competency assessment for students with special educational needs and non-Chinese speaking students;	Ongoing	35. The Committee will continuously review and enhance related arrangements.
(vi) to ensure the interests of students should come first in practices of effective learning and teaching based on curriculum documents so as to equip students with the abilities to embrace future challenges with a positive and proactive attitude and pursue lifelong learning and whole-person development; and	Ongoing	36. See paragraphs 33-34 above for the follow-ups.
(vii) to review the above recommendations on an on-going basis for improvement.	Ongoing	37. See paragraphs 33-34 above for the follow-ups.

## (2) Follow-up of the Committee's Recommendations in the Report in December 2016<sup>24</sup>

Recommendations	Progress	Follow-ups
<u>Recommendation 1 Handling the problem of over-drilling – removing the incentives for over-drilling induced by TSA</u>  <i>Design of assessment papers and items</i>  4.5 The Committee <b>recommends</b> that the improved assessment papers and item design under the Tryout Study should be extended to the TSA thereafter.	Completed	38. See paragraphs 1-2 above for the follow-ups.

<sup>24</sup> The recommendations are quoted from the "Report on 2016 Tryout Study (Primary 3)" in December 2016.



<p><i>Meaningful assignments</i></p> <p>4.6 The Committee <b>recommends</b> that EDB continue to communicate with the education sector with a view to dealing with the situation of over-drilling.</p>	Ongoing	39. See paragraphs 7-9 above for the follow-ups.
<p>4.7 The Committee <b>recommends</b> that EDB continue to make use of different channels and approaches, such as teacher training programmes, school development visits, school curriculum visits and focus inspections, to see how the various recommendations set out in EDB Circular No. 18/2015, particularly those pertaining to over-drilling, are implemented in schools, and to reiterate that the quality of homework is more important than the quantity. The modes and contents of homework should cater for the learning needs and abilities of students, and teachers need to help students consolidate and extend their learning based on their established foundation. Mechanical drills, repetitive copying and rote learning should be avoided. Schools should also consider more comprehensively and fully the diversity of learning, such as age, gender, physical development/condition, social development, learning ability and needs, interests, family background and expectations, community and cultural contexts of students at different learning stages (including kindergarten) to design diversified and appropriate assignments so that students can have spare time to relax after completing assignments and revising to ensure a balanced physical and psychological development.</p>	Ongoing	<p>40. The EDB, in early February 2017, contacted more than 500 primary schools which have been adopting local curriculum to understand the implementation of the “Guidelines on Homework and Tests in Schools”, including whether they have consulted and informed parents and uploaded the relevant policies to schools’ web pages. On the whole, all schools have formulated school-based homework and assessment policies according to the bureau’s guidelines. Most primary schools also consulted parents regarding homework and assessment policies. The EDB has reminded a small number of schools which have not consulted their parents to collect parental views as required by EDB Circular No. 18/2015.</p> <p>41. The EDB is highly concerned about the over-drilling issue. Regarding inquiries or views on the “drilling issue”, if they were made directly to the EDB with the name of the school, the EDB had followed up according to the existing mechanism. In case of doubt, the EDB had contacted the schools concerned for understanding the details. The EDB staff also encouraged schools to strengthen communication with parents and regularly review their school-based homework policies and measures to meet the needs, interests and abilities of students.</p>

<p>4.8 EDB should continue urging schools to strengthen communication with parents. Schools should formulate and coordinate appropriate school-based homework and assessment policies by planning holistically, synthesising the objectives in the three aspects of learning, teaching and assessment, and communicate with parents. Yearly review should be conducted in a timely manner, including whether it is necessary to purchase supplementary exercises, and should seek parents' views on relevant issues through parent-teacher associations in order to reach a consensus and secure parents' co-operation in not arranging their children to have mechanical drills for TSA at external institutions. Also, teachers should use their professional knowledge and make more use of qualitative methods to analyse students' work to provide feedback to learning and teaching with reference to the learning difficulties encountered by students, such as enhancing classroom learning and teaching strategies, learning materials and assessment designs, and designing differentiated assignments that are close to students' daily experiences, interesting and progressive, focusing on the cultivation of students' generic skills, such as creativity and problem-solving skills.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>42. See paragraph 40 above for the follow-ups.</p>
<p>4.9 The Committee <b>recommends</b> that schools should pay attention to the arrangements of supplementary lessons so as to avoid affecting the healthy growth and whole-person development of students.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>43. The EDB will continue to monitor the situation.</p>

<p><u>Recommendation 2 Removing stakes</u></p> <p>4.11 As recommended by the Committee in February 2016, the EDB has stepped up public education and enhanced training for teaching staff at different stages (including training for prospective teachers, pre-service training for appointed teachers, and in-service training for serving teachers) and the response is positive. The Committee <b>recommends</b> that the EDB continues to organise these training programmes to enhance the assessment literacy of various sectors, and encourage better use of assessment information or data to provide feedback to learning and teaching and develop and refine the school-based curriculum and learning activities. The EDB should continue to work with various stakeholders in their various roles to ensure of TSA data in the promotion of quality education which addresses students' learning needs, embodies professionalism and is founded on mutual trust among stakeholders, hence serving the functions of BCA to the fullest extent.</p>	Ongoing	44. See paragraphs 4-6 above for the follow-ups.
<p>4.12 To further remove the stakes of TSA and deepen mutual trust, the Committee <b>recommends</b> that the EDB strengthens internal guidelines to provide clear guidelines on the use of TSA data and information by various sections of the EDB.</p>	Completed	45. See paragraph 12 above for the follow-ups.
<p><u>Recommendation 3 Enhancing communication and deepening mutual trust</u></p> <p><i>The Government and school sponsoring bodies</i></p> <p>4.13 Meanwhile, as a principal partner in school management, the Committee <b>recommends</b> that EDB maintain communication with school sponsoring bodies and school managers, strengthen professional training and deepen mutual trust, ensuring that TSA data is used properly to achieve the objective of enhancing the school-based curriculum and teaching practices.</p>	Ongoing	46. See paragraph 7 above for the follow-ups.

<p><i>Parents and schools</i></p> <p>4.14 Admitting that parents are major stakeholders in education, the Committee <b>recommends</b> that EDB and schools continue to enhance parents' understanding of education issues through various channels.</p>	Ongoing	47. See paragraphs 8-10 above for the follow-ups.
<p><i>Allocation of resources</i></p> <p>4.15 Besides, the Committee <b>recommends</b> that the Quality Education Fund can consider including promoting parents' understanding of "assessment for learning" in the priority themes and activities to encourage schools, tertiary institutions, research organisations and non-governmental organisations, etc. to enhance parents' understanding of "assessment for learning", and making use of existing resources to design different types of activities to enhance the assessment literacy of the education sector and parents. Meanwhile, related successful experiences can be shared through the Quality Education Fund Thematic Networks.</p>	Completed	48. See paragraph 15 above for the follow-ups.
<p><u>Recommendation 4 Enhancing assessment literacy, strengthening professional capabilities</u></p> <p><i>Providing support for schools and students</i></p> <p>4.16 The Committee <b>recommends</b> that the survey on non-academic data conducted by an independent organisation should be continued, and the sample size of the survey should be expanded to enhance the reference value of the data and information to provide more useful information to schools to provide feedback to learning and teaching. The questionnaire survey on learning attitude and motivation includes schools, students and parents. The Committee <b>recommends</b> that the use of questionnaire survey could be further explored to understand the views of schools and parents on homework arrangements and pressure.</p>	Ongoing	49. The 2016 Tryout Study and 2017 Research Study conducted surveys to collect students' non-academic data. Qualified academic institutions were invited to conduct the survey through open quotation. About 300 primary schools participated in the survey.

<p>4.17 The Committee recognises that targeted support measures contribute significantly to the better use of assessments by schools to facilitate learning. Under the Tryout Study, including workshops, seminars and school-based support services are well-received by schools. The Committee <b>recommends</b> that EDB should continue to strengthen various support measures to schools to promote “assessment for learning” and enhance assessment literacy. The Committee notices that in the 2014/15 school year, more than 70% (about 370) of primary schools in the territory were provided with the school-based support services, among which about 280 primary schools were provided with support services in relation to the subjects of Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics. The Committee <b>recommends</b> that EDB should continue to provide diversified professional support services to schools to cater for the different needs of schools and teachers.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>50. Under the 2017 Research Study, the EDB continued to provide diversified professional support services to schools to meet the different needs of schools and teachers.</p> <p>51. See paragraph 6 above for the follow-ups.</p>
<p>4.18 Besides, the Committee <b>recommends</b> that EDB should continue to develop and encourage schools and parents to use the Web-based Learning and Teaching Support (WLTS) website. At present, more than 730 sets of learning and teaching resources on the three subjects of Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics are available on the website for teachers’ use. Such learning and teaching resources are developed according to the learning of Basic Competencies, including lesson plans, suggested learning activities, presentations on teaching practices, worksheets, assessment tasks, etc. Teachers can make use of these resources to help students acquire the Basic Competencies in an effective manner and overcome learning difficulties. The Committee <b>recommends</b> that EDB should continue to optimise the Student Assessment Repository (STAR) and continue to encourage teachers to use the resources to optimise learning, teaching and assessment as well as promoting the</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>52. Through the projects in collaboration with tertiary institutions in 2016 and 2017, the EDB, schools and tertiary institutions jointly developed learning, teaching and assessment materials which are uploaded to the WLTS platform.</p> <p>53. Hong Kong Education City (HKEdCity) has enhanced and added features to the STAR platform (such as platform interface, reporting system, etc.). The EDB and HKEdCity will continue to collect views from different stakeholders, review and enhance the platform.</p>

concept of assessment for learning.		
<u>Recommendation 5 Development strategies for continuously enhancing the effectiveness and value of TSA</u>  4.19 In the review process of the Tryout Study, the Committee recognises the importance of the roles of various stakeholders in promoting quality education. Therefore, the Committee <b>recommends</b> the following framework, which highlights the principles, strategies and respective roles of participation, for participation of various stakeholders. It is hoped that through concerted efforts of all sectors, we can gather strength to serve the function of “assessment for learning”.	Ongoing	54. In early 2017, the Chairman of the Committee on Home-School Co-operation and District Federations of Parent-Teacher Associations launched an initiative on “Opposing over-drilling and reaffirming the good use of assessment to provide feedback to learning and teaching” which received positive response from school sponsoring bodies, school councils and school heads associations. This reflects that various stakeholders have a clear consensus on opposing meaningless, repetitive and mechanical drills, and making concerted efforts to promote the healthy development of students with their learning needs as the prime consideration.
<i>Long-term recommendations</i>  4.25 Meanwhile, the Committee acknowledges that the advancement of information technology enables assessment tools to render more instant, effective, in-depth and interactive analysis and feedback. The Committee considers that in the medium and long run, a study could be conducted to explore how to carry out assessments with the aid of computers and interactive tools to enhance the function of providing feedback to schools. The Committee <b>recommends</b> exploring how the existing web-based central assessment item bank for “Student Assessment Repository” (STAR) could be expanded and strengthened to cater for daily learning and teaching as well as assessment. The Committee will continue to study the development of STAR and expects a preliminary recommendation could be available in 2018.	Ongoing	55. See paragraphs 32, 33 and 53 above for the follow-ups.

**Annex 3****Sessions to Collect Stakeholders' Views Regarding the Review of TSA**

	<b>Event</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
1.	Assessment for Learning – Territory-wide System Assessment (Primary) Seminar	30 October 2015	1
2.	Meeting with Association of School Heads of Government Primary Schools	6 November 2015	1
3.	Focus Group Meetings with Representatives of Federations of Parent-Teacher Associations of 18 Districts (2 sessions)	11 November 2015 12 November 2015	2
4.	Focus Group Meetings for Teachers		3
(a)	- Primary 3 Chinese Language	18 November 2015	
(b)	- Primary 3 English Language	18 November 2015	
(c)	- Primary 3 Mathematics	20 November 2015	
5.	Legislative Council Meeting	25 November 2015	1
6.	Focus Group Meeting with Federations of Parent-Teacher Associations of 18 Districts	27 November 2015	1
7.	Special Meeting of Legislative Council Panel on Education	29 November 2015	1
8.	Focus Group Meeting with the Committee on Home-School Co-operation	1 December 2015	1
9.	Meeting with TSA Concern Group	2 December 2015	1
10.	Children's Rights Forum of the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau	4 December 2015	1
11.	Focus Group Meetings for Teachers		3
(a)	- Primary 6 Mathematics	8 December 2015	
(b)	- Primary 6 Chinese Language	9 December 2015	
(c)	- Primary 6 English Language	10 December 2015	
12.	Seminars on 'Territory-wide System Assessment' for Parents		6
(a)	- Kwun Tong, Wong Tai Sin and Sai Kung Districts	16 December 2015	
(b)	- North, Tai Po and Sha Tin Districts	17 December 2015	
(c)	- Central and Western, Eastern, Southern, Wan Chai and Islands Districts	7 January 2016	
(d)	- Tuen Mun, Yuen Long, Kwai Tsing and Tsuen Wan Districts	8 January 2016	
(e)	- Kowloon City, Sham Shui Po and Yau Tsim Mong Districts	11 January 2016	
(f)	- Members of the Public	19 January 2016	
13.	Meeting of Legislative Council Panel on	11 January 2016	1

	Event	Date	Frequency
	Education		
14.	Meeting with New Territories School Heads Association, Kowloon Region School Heads Association and Hong Kong Islands School Heads Association	27 January 2016	1
15.	Meeting with TSA Concern Group	27 January 2016	1
16.	Meeting with Hong Kong Federation of Education Workers	1 February 2016	1
17.	Meeting with Federations of Parent-Teacher Associations of 18 Districts	1 February 2016	1
18.	Meeting with Representatives of School Sponsoring Bodies	2 February 2016	1
19.	Meeting with Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union	2 February 2016	1
20.	Meeting with Education Convergence	3 February 2016	1
21.	Chinese New Year Gathering cum Exchange Meeting with Primary School Heads	25 February 2016	1
22.	Meeting of Legislative Council Panel on Education	22 March 2016	1
23.	Briefing session on the 2016 Tryout Study (Primary 3)	30 March 2016	1
24.	2016 Tryout Study Professional Sharing Session with School Heads (I)	6 June 2016	1
25.	2016 Tryout Study Focus Group Meetings for <u>Teachers</u> – Assessment Papers and Question Design		9
(a)	- Chinese Language (3 sessions)	15, 16 & 18 June 2016	
(b)	- English Language (3 sessions)	16-18 June 2016	
(c)	- Mathematics (3 sessions)	16-18 June 2016	
26.	2016 Tryout Study Focus Group Meetings for <u>Marking Personnel</u>		3
(a)	- Mathematics	18 July 2016	
(b)	- English Language	19 July 2016	
(c)	- Chinese Language	20 July 2016	
27.	2016 Tryout Study Professional Sharing Session with School Heads (II)	14 September 2016	1
28.	2016 Tryout Study HKEAA Focus Group Meeting for School Heads of Primary Schools in Hong Kong	13 October 2016	1
29.	Meeting with TSA Concern Group	10 November 2016	1
30.	2016 Tryout Study Seminars on Student Performance		3



	<b>Event</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
(a)	- Mathematics	14 November 2016	
(b)	- English Language	14 November 2016	
(c)	- Chinese Language	15 November 2016	
31.	2016 Tryout Study Focus Group Meetings on School Reports		3
(a)	- Chinese Language	24 November 2016	
(b)	- English Language	25 November 2016	
(c)	- Mathematics	28 November 2016	
32.	2016 Tryout Study Professional Sharing Session with School Heads (III)	8 December 2016	1
33.	2016 Tryout Study Focus Group Meeting for Parents (19 Sessions)	30 November 2016 – 12 December 2016	19
34.	Meeting of Legislative Council Panel on Education	12 December 2016	1
35.	Meeting with Parents' Union	20 December 2016	1
36.	Meeting with Federations of Parent-Teacher Associations of 18 Districts	20 December 2016	1
37.	Meeting with Support Groups of the Initiative on "Safeguarding the healthy development of children, supporting the autonomy of the education profession" (representatives of primary school heads association, school sponsoring bodies, school heads of the tryout schools and Federations of Parent-Teacher Associations of 18 Districts)	23 January 2017	1
38.	Meeting with the Education Sector and Stakeholders: Announcement of Arrangements for the 2017 Research Study	23 January 2017	1
39.	Seminars for School Managers and Parents in the 18 Districts		18
(a)	- Kwun Tong District	19 January 2017	
(b)	- Eastern District	24 January 2017	
(c)	- Tuen Mun District	6 February 2017	
(d)	- Wong Tai Sin District	15 February 2017	
(e)	- Kowloon City District	16 February 2017	
(f)	- Yuen Long District	16 February 2017	
(g)	- Southern District	17 February 2017	
(h)	- Kwai Tsing District	20 February 2017	
(i)	- Central and Western District	21 February 2017	

	Event	Date	Frequency
(j)	- Wan Chai District	24 February 2017	
(k)	- Islands District	27 February 2017	
(l)	- Sai Kung District	27 February 2017	
(m)	- North District	28 February 2017	
(n)	- Tai Po District	1 March 2017	
(o)	- Sham Shui Po District	3 March 2017	
(p)	- Yau Tsim Mong District	10 March 2017	
(q)	- Tsuen Wan District	10 March 2017	
(r)	- Sha Tin District	17 March 2017	
40.	Focus Group Meeting with the Committee on Home-School Co-operation	8 February 2017	1
41.	Chinese New Year Gathering cum Exchange Meeting with Primary School Heads	8 February 2017	1
42.	Briefing Session on the 2017 Research Study (all primary school heads, PSMCDs and teachers concerned)	15 February 2017	1
43.	Public Hearing of the Subcommittee on Children's Rights of the Legislative Council	20 March 2017	1
44.	Briefing Session on the 2017 Research Study (all primary school heads, PSMCDs and panel heads of Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics)	3 April 2017	1
45.	Meeting of Legislative Council Panel on Education	10 April 2017	1
46.	Public Hearing of Legislative Council Panel on Education	8 May 2017	1
47.	2017 Research Study Focus Group Meetings for Teachers – Assessment Papers and Question Design	14, 16, 17 & 19 June 2017 15-17 & 19 June 2017 15-17 & 19 June 2017	12
(a)	- Chinese Language (4 sessions)		
(b)	- English Language (4 sessions)		
(c)	- Mathematics (4 sessions)		
48.	2017 Research Study Focus Group Meetings for School Heads of Hong Kong Primary Schools (2 sessions)	3 & 5 July 2017	2
49.	2017 Research Study Focus Group Meeting for Government Primary Schools	17 July 2017	1
50.	2017 Research Study Focus Group Meetings for Marking Personnel		3

	<b>Event</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
(a)	- Mathematics	25 July 2017	
(b)	- English Language	27 July 2017	
(c)	- Chinese Language	28 July 2017	
51.	Meeting with Parents' Concern Group	10 August 2017	1
52.	2017 Research Study Focus Group Meetings for Parents (41 sessions)	18 September – 18 October 2017	41
53.	Meeting with Representatives of School Sponsoring Bodies	25 October 2017	1
54.	Meeting with Federations of Parent-Teacher Associations of 18 Districts	25 October 2017	1
55.	2017 Research Study Seminar on Making Effective Use of Primary 3 Territory-wide System Assessment Data		3
(a)	- Chinese Language	10 November 2017	
(b)	- Mathematics	10 November 2017	
(c)	- English Language	13 November 2017	
56.	Sharing on Enhancing Teachers' Assessment Literacy for Designing Quality Assessment Tasks (I) (Government Primary Schools)	12 December 2017	1

**(2015-2017)**  
**Sub-total** 171

## 2018

	<b>Event</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
57.	2017 Research Study Focus Group Meetings for Teachers – Reporting (18 sessions)		18
(a)	- Chinese Language (6 sessions)	26, 30 & 31 January 2018	
(b)	- English Language (6 sessions)	26, 29 & 31 January 2018	
(c)	- Mathematics (6 sessions)	26, 30 & 31 January 2018	
58.	Meeting with Representatives of School Sponsoring Bodies	15 February 2018	1
59.	Chinese New Year Gathering cum Exchange Meeting with Primary School Heads	2 March 2018	1

**(2018) Sub-total** 20

	Event	Date (2015-2018) Total	Frequency
			191

**Annex 4****Minutes of the Consultation Meetings of the 2017 Research Study**

	Event	Date	Frequency	Summary
1.	Seminars for School Managers and Parents in the 18 Districts	19 January – 17 March 2017	18	Annex 4 (a)
2.	Chinese New Year Gathering cum Exchange Meeting with Primary School Heads	8 February 2017	1	Annex 4 (b)
3.	2017 Research Study Focus Group Meetings for Teachers – Assessment Papers and Question Design (Chinese Language)	14, 16, 17 & 19 June 2017	4	Annex 4 (c)
4.	2017 Research Study Focus Group Meetings for Teachers – Assessment Papers and Question Design (English Language)	15-17 & 19 June 2017	4	Annex 4 (c)
5.	2017 Research Study Focus Group Meetings for Teachers – Assessment Papers and Question Design (Mathematics)	15-17 & 19 June 2017	4	Annex 4 (c)
6.	2017 Research Study Focus Group Meetings for School Heads	3 & 5 July 2017	2	Annexes 4 (d) & (e)
7.	2017 Research Study Focus Group Meetings for Marking Personnel (Mathematics)	25 July 2017	1	Annex 4 (f)
8.	2017 Research Study Focus Group Meetings for Marking Personnel (English Language)	27 July 2017	1	Annex 4 (f)
9.	2017 Research Study Focus Group Meetings for Marking Personnel (Chinese Language)	28 July 2017	1	Annex 4 (f)
10.	2017 Research Study Focus Group Meetings for Parents	18 September – 18 October 2017	41	Annex 4 (g)
11.	Meeting with Federations of Parent-Teacher Associations of 18 Districts	25 October 2017	1	Annex 4 (h)
12.	2017 Research Study Focus Group Meetings for Teachers – Reporting (Chinese Language)	26, 30 & 31 January 2018	6	Annex 4 (i)
13.	2017 Research Study Focus Group Meetings for Teachers – Reporting (English Language)	26, 29 & 31 January 2018	6	Annex 4 (i)
14.	2017 Research Study Focus Group Meetings for Teachers – Reporting (Mathematics)	26, 30 & 31 January 2018	6	Annex 4 (i)

**Seminars for School Managers and Parents in the 18 Districts  
(Kwun Tong District)**

Date: 19 January 2017 (Thursday)  
Time: 6:30-8:45 pm  
Venue: C.C.C. Kei Faat Primary School (Yau Tong)

**Summary:**

**1. Issue of drilling:**

- Participants enquired what measures would be taken by the Education Bureau (EDB) to ensure that schools would not over-drill students if the 2016 Tryout Study was extended to all primary schools in the territory.
- Response from speakers:
  - The Committee was concerned about how to deal with the issue of over-drilling, and recommended in its report four enhancement measures to remove incentives for drilling and foster mutual trust and close cooperation between the EDB and schools. Such measures included removing the Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA) from “Key Performance Measures” for primary schools; strengthening internal guidelines; having a grasp of students’ learning diversity; and the EDB acting as a bridge to enhance communication between schools and parents on homework policies and exercise-related matters.
  - Representatives of parents indicated that they trusted schools and supported schools’ professional decisions.

**2. Retaining TSA:**

- Participants remarked that they had a positive attitude towards TSA and that it should be retained as it was on the right track.
- Response from speakers:
  - The education sector also reflected that the assessment data was useful for learning and teaching.

**3. Publicity of TSA:**

- Participants suggested that the EDB should step up publicity efforts. The current arrangement for promoting TSA on Road Show was inadequate, and

different channels, such as MTR and the Internet, should be used to disseminate information about TSA to different stakeholders.

## **Seminars for School Managers and Parents in the 18 Districts (Eastern District)**

Date: 24 January 2017 (Tuesday)  
Time: 6:30-8:30 pm  
Venue: Chinese Methodist School, Tanner Hill

### **Summary:**

#### **1. Issue of drilling:**

- Participants were concerned about the measures taken by the EDB to halt over-drilling in schools.
- Response from speakers:
  - The Regional Education Offices maintained close liaison with schools. They not only followed up parents' concerns about excessive homework and drilling in schools, but also grasped the situation of schools by ringing and visiting them. Apart from issuing guidelines on homework policies for schools to follow, the EDB provided schools with support and took follow-up actions in a timely manner.
  - While respecting the arrangements made by parents for their children, schools had the responsibility for letting parents understand that even in the same school, parents might have differing views on school policies and homework arrangements. Schools urged parents to acquire a true understanding of their children's abilities and potential.
  - Schools were aware of parents' worries about their children's learning. Teachers would adapt the curriculum and cater for learning diversity, helping students overcome learning problems and relieving pressure on parents.
  - The assessment of Basic Competencies was a very low-stake assessment. The EDB had removed TSA from "Key Performance Measures" for primary schools to alleviate schools' concerns about the risks involved in the use of assessment data.
  - The Curriculum Development Institute had developed curriculum-based teaching kits and resources for teachers. Also, the EDB had organised parent education seminars for teachers and parents, and provided school-based support services for all schools in the territory. With extensive coverage, such services not only addressed subject-based needs, but also contributed to the development of a school culture and moral education.



They aligned with school development and students' needs in a timely manner, thereby enhancing the learning efficacy of students. Schools could also make good use of online resources and the support services arranged by the EDB. Schools had considerable autonomy to adapt with support personnel the curriculum in light of school context, for the purpose of providing feedback to learning and teaching.

## **2. 2017 Research Study:**

- Parents enquired if their children could participate in Basic Competency Assessments (BCA) on a voluntary basis.
- Response from speakers:
  - BCA was conducted on the general school day and was the day-to-day activity of the school, and all students were encouraged to actively take part in it. With the implementation of the 2017 Research Study in all schools in the territory, schools would follow the EDB's guidelines and collaborate with parent-teacher associations and school management committees to fully explain relevant arrangements to parents so as to alleviate their concerns.
  - Parent representatives expressed their trust in schools and supported their professional decisions. They considered that data in the assessment reports could enable schools to have a better grasp of students' standards and hence provide feedback to learning and teaching.

## **3. Administrative arrangements for Primary 3 and Primary 6 TSA:**

- Participants enquired how the EDB determined whether TSA should be conducted every year or in alternate years.
- Response from speakers:
  - It was not possible for Primary 3 TSA to follow the alternate-year arrangement adopted by Primary 6 TSA. This was because assessment reports of Primary 3 TSA could in the following school year provide feedback to teaching of Key Learning Stages 1 and 2, and give evidence for schools to identify learning diversity among students in connection with curriculum contents. In this way, schools could promptly adapt teaching contents so as to enhance the learning efficacy of students. Primary 6 TSA and Pre-Secondary One Hong Kong Attainment Test (Pre-S1 HKAT) were carried out in alternate years. The alternate-year arrangements were made to balance the frequency of students' participation in the assessments.

#### **4. Publicity of the 2016 Tryout Study:**

- There was still room for enhancement in the click-through rate of the EDB's YouTube Channel. The current arrangement for promoting TSA on Road Show was inadequate, and different channels should be used to disseminate information about BCA to different stakeholders to strengthen public education.
- Response from speakers:
  - Videos of schools sharing their experience of the 2016 Tryout Study had been uploaded to the EDB's YouTube Channel for public viewing. The EDB attached great importance to parent education, hoping that schools would use effective resources to strengthen communication with parents. To foster mutual trust between parents and schools, the EDB would develop a resource kit for schools to clearly explain the concepts of BCA to parents in light of school context.

**Seminars for School Managers and Parents in the 18 Districts  
(Tuen Mun District)**

Date: 6 February 2017 (Monday)  
Time: 6:30-8:30 pm  
Venue: Tuen Mun Government Secondary School  
Organisers: Education Bureau and Federations of Parent-Teacher Associations

**Summary:**

**1. Level of difficulty of assessment items:**

- Participants remarked that the number of challenging items in TSA had been increasing year after year and enquired what measures would be taken to avoid this in future assessments.
- Participants acknowledged the measures taken by the EDB and the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) for refining item design under the 2016 Tryout Study.
- Response from speakers:
  - The purpose of TSA was to assess students' Basic Competencies in order to provide feedback to learning and teaching.
  - The EDB and the HKEAA would, making reference to past experience, views of different stakeholders and the principles of item setting for the 2016 Tryout Study, refine item design to tie in with the standards of Primary 3 students. The items would closely relate to their everyday experiences and school life.
  - Take the subject of Chinese Language as an example. For the writing assessment, the format of practical writing was provided so that students did not need to memorise the format. For the reading assessment, the total number of words was limited to not more than 1200 and the contents were comprehensible to students. As for the subject of Mathematics, the number of assessment items was reduced by 20% and the "five-options-choose-two" items were eliminated.
  - Every year, the EDB and the HKEAA would conduct a review of item design and monitor the correct response rate of each item. If the correct response rate was below 50%, timely actions would be taken to look into item design, the abilities of students or the difficulties in curriculum design.

**2. Assessment modes of listening and group discussion for Chinese Language:**

- To cope with group discussion assessment of Chinese Language for Primary 3 TSA, schools needed to teach students discussion skills, and this increased

incentives for drilling.

➤ Response from speakers:

- Listening, speaking, reading and writing were considered four main areas in language subjects to highlight the importance of communication. The group discussion speaking assessment of Primary 3 TSA was conducted on a sampling basis, and not every student needed to take part in the assessment. Teachers had already incorporated the skills of group discussion into activities in everyday teaching to enhance students' language proficiency. In the group discussion, students were simply required to have an ordinary conversation applying the skills they had learnt in daily lessons.

**3. Assessment contents of TSA and Pre-Secondary One Hong Kong Attainment Test (Pre-S1 HKAT):**

➤ Participants were concerned about the significant differences in assessment contents between TSA and Pre-S1 HKAT. They suggested that item design should align with teaching modes in schools.

➤ Response from speakers:

- The assessment objectives and contents of TSA and Pre-S1 HKAT were not the same. The former assessed Basic Competencies while the latter made an evaluation of the whole curriculum and its results could allocate the bands.
- The Committee would continue conveying views on the assessment modes of TSA and Pre-S1 HKAT to the EDB.

## **Seminars for School Managers and Parents in the 18 Districts (Wong Tai Sin District)**

Date: 15 February 2017 (Wednesday)  
Time: 6:30-8:30 pm  
Venue: Wong Tai Sin Government Primary School

### **Summary:**

#### **1. Administrative arrangements:**

- Participants enquired why only Primary 3, Primary 6 and Secondary 3 students needed to be assessed.
- Response from speakers:
  - There were four key learning stages (namely Primary 1-3, Primary 4-6, Secondary 1-3 and Secondary 4-6), and a review had to be undertaken for each key learning stage.
  - Basic Competencies merely formed part of the curriculum. Assessments were made to find out whether students had, upon completion of a particular key learning stage, acquired Basic Competencies for effective learning in the following key learning stage.
  - The key learning stages mentioned above were interconnected. TSA enabled schools to grasp how much basic knowledge students had acquired in a particular key learning stage, and thus evaluate teaching practices and take follow-up actions. Since students' learning progress and needs varied between different cohorts, it was necessary to make adjustments to the curriculum and teaching practices to provide feedback to learning and teaching.

#### **2. TSA as an assessment tool:**

- Participants enquired whether TSA was an assessment tool developed locally and whether a similar assessment was conducted in neighbouring countries.
- Participants asked if TSA could replace schools' internal examinations.
- Participants enquired why TSA did not cover all subjects.
- Response from speakers:
  - System assessments were conducted in such neighbouring places as Singapore and Taiwan.
  - Assessment served as an important reference tool in teaching, and different assessment tools could complement one another.

- TSA was just one of many assessment tools. It evaluated overall students' Basic Competencies at a particular key learning stage, enabling schools to enhance the overall learning efficacy of students and follow up and adjust teaching arrangements. Schools' internal examinations were stage-based assessments, which reviewed the learning progress of students for rendering support on an individual basis.
- The EDB welcomed further suggestions and views, such as extending to cover other subjects.

### **3. Attainment criteria of TSA:**

- Participants enquired whether standards had been set for TSA in that students failed if they were unable to meet the standards.
- Participants were concerned about whether TSA would be used for the allocation of secondary school places.
- Parents were worried that TSA might invite comparison among students.
- Parents were worried that schools might at the early stage push students for higher marks because of TSA, and this could give rise to drilling.
- Response from speakers:
  - Instead of assessing the academic results of individual students, TSA was meant for reflecting the overall performance of schools. It helped schools to, through teaching practices, enhance students' abilities.
  - School reports did not show the results of individual students but indicated the overall performance of each grade. TSA data enabled schools to provide feedback to learning and teaching and adjust teaching arrangements so as to enhance the quality of teaching and the learning abilities of students.
  - Without indicating results of individual students, TSA would neither invite comparison among students nor affect the allocation of secondary school places.
  - TSA only reflected the overall learning performance of students of a particular grade. It assessed students' attainment of Basic Competencies upon completion of a key learning stage, and served as a tool for schools to provide feedback to learning and teaching. As such, there was no incentive for drilling.

**Seminars for School Managers and Parents in the 18 Districts  
(Kowloon City District)**

Date: 16 February 2017 (Thursday)  
Time: 6:30-8:30 pm  
Venue: Lecture Theatre, 4/F, West Block,  
EDB Kowloon Tong Education Services Centre

**Summary:**

**1. Over-drilling in some schools:**

- Parents enquired what actions would be taken by the EDB when some schools purchased supplementary exercises, over-drilled students or assigned more homework for TSA, and whether there was a reasonable standard to assess the amount of homework.
- Response from speakers:
  - The EDB worked together to remove the incentives for over-drilling induced by TSA and alleviated stakeholders' concerns over the risks.
  - Students of the same class might vary considerably in how much time they spent finishing the same amount of homework, depending on a number of factors (e.g. learning patterns and lifestyle, abilities, family situation, the setting of doing homework, and extra-curricular activities).
  - According to a statistical study involving a number of schools, the amount of time students spent on homework varied greatly (0 to 5 hours) from school to school. This further demonstrated that the time students spent on homework was affected by various factors, so it was difficult to determine if the amount of homework in a particular school was excessive or insufficient. As such, it was not desirable to fix the amount of homework for schools and forbid them to purchase supplementary exercises.
  - The Regional Education Offices maintained close liaison with schools, and the School Development Section of each district regularly held in-depth discussions with schools on homework policies and assessment arrangements, ascertaining whether schools had clearly explained the arrangements to parents and taken their views into consideration, and whether there were drilling practices for TSA. Parents might approach the respective School Development Section for follow-up actions if they considered that there were excessive homework and drilling practices in

schools.

- Some parents were worried that their concerns about drilling/excessive homework might be disregarded by schools. Speakers responded that:
  - Officers of various sections and district offices of the EDB were keeping a close watch on the issues and working out solutions. Hence, parents needed not worry that their concerns would be disregarded.
  - The initiative of “Safeguarding the healthy development of children, supporting the autonomy of the education profession” was jointly issued by the EDB, the Committee on Home-School Co-operation, federations of parent-teacher associations, major school sponsoring bodies, associations of primary school heads and school councils. This illustrated that the parties concerned had a consensus and a common goal on students’ learning, and would work together to solve the issues.

## **2. Incentives for drilling:**

- Parents hoped that the EDB would act as a bridge among various parties to co-ordinate their different views. When drilling practices were found in schools, the EDB should take actions and identify the causes of drilling, the parties involved and their motives, etc.
- Response from speakers:
  - Attaching great importance to the views and feedback of various parties, the EDB, at the meetings of the Committee, paid heed to opinions of stakeholders and actively considered the suggestions (e.g. signing a charter) made by those who had differing views on the related policies.
  - The EDB was determined to review BCA from a professional perspective and strike a balance among the interests of different stakeholders, including respecting schools’ professional decisions and autonomy in the application of assessment data.

## **3. Publicity of BCA and the 2016 Tryout Study:**

- Parents hoped that the EDB would step up publicity efforts to impart information about BCA to all sectors of the community to alleviate their concerns.
- Response from speakers:
  - The EDB had actively stepped up publicity and facilitated communication. An example was the seminars conducted in the 18 districts, and a resource kit for BCA had been produced for reference.



- The EDB would continue organising more forums and seminars to keep various sectors informed of relevant arrangements and encourage their participation.

**Seminars for School Managers and Parents in the 18 Districts  
(Yuen Long District)**

Date: 16 February 2017 (Thursday)  
Time: 6:30-8:30 pm  
Venue: Yuen Long Merchants Association Secondary School

**Summary:**

Participants realised the content of the seminar.

## **Seminars for School Managers and Parents in the 18 Districts (Southern District)**

Date: 17 February 2017 (Friday)  
Time: 6:30-8:30 pm  
Venue: Hong Kong Southern District Government Primary School

### **Summary:**

#### **1. 2017 Research Study:**

- Participants were concerned about the arrangements for reviewing the 2017 Research Study.
- Response from speakers:
  - Upon a review of the 2016 Tryout Study, the Committee found it worthwhile to promote the new initiatives under the 2016 Tryout Study and recommended that the BCA be implemented in the 2017/18 school year. The Committee would continue reviewing the implementation of BCA and make recommendations for enhancement.
  - The Committee was established in October 2014 and advised the Government on the implementation of Basic Competency Assessments. However, before specific proposals were discussed, there had been voices in the community since October 2015. The EDB would conduct a comprehensive review of the 2016 Tryout Study in order to collect more comprehensive feedback to continue enhancing arrangements for TSA.
- Participants were concerned about the arrangements for catering for learner diversity.
- Response from speakers:
  - The main purpose of TSA was to assess whether students had, upon completion of a key learning stage, acquired the specified Basic Competencies for effective learning in the following key learning stage. To cater for learner diversity, teachers and parents might, in light of the abilities and needs of students, make good use of exercises and activities on the e-learning platforms of STAR or WLTS to facilitate their learning.
  - Schools admitting five or more non-Chinese speaking students would be provided with supplementary reports to focus on understanding the learning needs of related students.
- Participants enquired if students could participate in BCA on a voluntary basis.
- Response from speakers:
  - BCA, like general school activities, would be conducted on school days. Schools would, in accordance with established procedures, handle students' absence for special reasons.

- Participants suggested that publicity efforts should be stepped up.
- Response from speakers:
  - To enable teachers, parents and members of the public to better understand BCA, the EDB was launching publicity campaigns as follows:
    - (1) Conducting seminars in the 18 districts;
    - (2) Showing videos of schools sharing their experience of the 2016 Tryout Study on mobile multimedia information systems and social media platforms;
    - (3) Sending officers to schools to organise parent education seminars for enhancing parents' assessment literacy and clarifying myths about TSA; and
    - (4) Calling upon teachers and parents to convey relevant messages to people they know in schools and the community, and to make good use of the resource kits for "assessment for learning" developed by the EDB.

## **Seminars for School Managers and Parents in the 18 Districts (Kwai Tsing District)**

Date: 20 February 2017 (Monday)  
Time: 6:30-8:45 pm  
Venue: Buddhist Lam Bing Yim Memorial School (Sponsored by Hong Kong Buddhist Association)

### **Summary:**

#### **1. TSA:**

- Participants acknowledged the benefits of TSA and had no objection to its implementation. They suggested that the EDB should take heed of the views of different stakeholders.
- A school head attending the seminar said that while his school did not participate in the 2016 Tryout Study, it was prepared to take part in the future BCA as the assessment data could help students to learn.
- Response from speakers:
  - The EDB had explained, through various channels, that TSA was a low-stake assessment, which would neither indicate results of individual students nor affect their further education. Meanwhile, TSA could enhance learning and teaching. People opposed TSA because they did not fully understand its concepts. The EDB would continue alleviating stakeholders' concerns about TSA by different means.

#### **2. School reports of the 2016 Tryout Study:**

- Participants enquired how many types of school reports (four types in total) could be selected by schools.
- Response from speakers:
  - Schools could make choices according to school context, e.g. four types for Chinese Language and one type for Mathematics. The EDB would continue to collect different views to improve the reports.

#### **3. Use of TSA data:**

- Participants suggested that since some school sponsoring bodies made a comparison among schools using TSA data and thus put pressure on schools, such data should be regarded as internal information of the EDB and should not be disclosed to schools.
- Response from speakers:
  - The EDB had communicated with different school sponsoring bodies, and a consensus about the appropriate use of data had been reached.

#### **4. Professional support measures under the 2016 Tryout Study:**

- Participants enquired about the application procedures and quotas for

- professional support services.
- Response from speakers:
    - Schools could make choices according to school context. Support services, including recommendations for teaching and parent education, were provided to meet the needs of schools.
- 5. Student Assessment Repository (STAR):**
- Participants were worried that deviations might arise in the use of STAR after a period of time, in that parents or teachers might download all the questions as exercises for students and thus exert pressure on them.
  - Some parents attending the seminar asked if students could access STAR on their own, not through schools, for self-learning.
  - Response from speakers:
    - Students had to access STAR via schools. Teachers logged in the system with their accounts, and then assigned assessment tasks to students in light of their abilities. After students completed the tasks, teachers would exercise professional judgement to arrange follow-up activities for students so as to enhance the efficacy of learning.
    - Parents could, through a student account, access the assessment reports and suggested answers to check on the learning progress of their children.
- 6. Strengthening communication among stakeholders:**
- Participants relayed the views of some parents that a lack of communication was the cause of drilling for TSA so that the EDB should maintain communication with different stakeholders.
  - Response from speakers:
    - Federations of parent-teacher associations were willing to act as a bridge of communication. They were collaborating with the EDB to conduct seminars in the 18 districts to strengthen communication and collect different views.

**Seminars for School Managers and Parents in the 18 Districts  
(Central and Western District)**

Date: 21 February 2017 (Tuesday)  
Time: 6:30-8:30 pm  
Venue: Chiu Sheung School, Hong Kong

**Summary:**

**1. Questions regarding assessment papers:**

- Participants enquired how to access the past papers of TSA.
- Response from speakers:
  - Past papers of TSA had been uploaded to the HKEAA website. Schools might download the past papers for reference in light of school context.
  - The EDB encouraged schools to use the STAR platform which was an online resource bank and suitable for students at different levels.
  - Supplementary exercises for TSA in the market had not been vetted and the items varied greatly in quality. Schools were advised to make use of the STAR platform to consolidate learning and cater for learner diversity.

**2. Report on the review of the 2016 Tryout Study:**

- Participants enquired how to access the views and feedback of the focus groups.
- Response from speakers:
  - The report on the review had been uploaded to the EDB website, which contained the views of the focus groups and parents.

**3. Difficulties in implementing TSA:**

- Participants were concerned about the difficulties in implementing TSA and enquired what could be done by schools and parents to facilitate the implementation.
- Response from speakers:
  - There was still room for the EDB to step up publicity for assessment policies. The EDB would step up publicity efforts and take improvement measures to overcome the inadequacies.
  - The EDB was producing a resource kit, which would be provided for schools upon completion to assist them in promoting parent education. Relevant materials would also be uploaded to the EDB webpage on “Assessment for Learning”. The EDB hoped that the positive message of “assessment for learning” would be disseminated through different channels.

- There was considerable resistance in the implementation process because TSA was associated with drilling. The EDB had issued clear guidelines on homework policies for schools to follow. The EDB explained that schools, parents and students perceived the amount of homework differently, and there were differing views on the amount of homework among parents and students.
- The EDB encouraged parents to know more about the mission of schools in order to select a suitable one in light of the personality, interests, abilities and learning modes of their children. Parents should also choose appropriate extra-curricular activities for children to help them maintain a balanced life.



**Seminars for School Managers and Parents in the 18 Districts  
(Wan Chai District)**

Date: 24 February 2017 (Friday)  
Time: 6:30-8:30 pm  
Venue: Hennessey Road Government Primary School

**Summary:**

**1. Implementation process of TSA:**

- Participants had no objection to the implementation of TSA because it helped enhance the effectiveness of learning and teaching. Yet, given the many negative messages emerging in the implementation process, they enquired whether there was room for improvement in connection with its implementation.
- Response from speakers:
  - In the process of implementation, some people expressed opposing views as they did not have an in-depth understanding of the concepts of assessment.
  - There was still room for the EDB to step up publicity for assessment policies. The EDB would step up publicity efforts and take improvement measures to overcome the inadequacies.
  - As such, the EDB had been taking different approaches to promote assessment literacy in order to alleviate public concerns. Over the past year or so, the EDB had collected views of different stakeholders through various channels (e.g. evaluation meetings, forums, consultation sessions, and seminars arranged by federations of parent-teacher associations in the 18 districts) to review and continuously refine the assessment arrangements. The EDB also explained that TSA was a low-stake assessment, which would neither indicate results of individual students nor affect students' further education and the allocation of school places. In fact, TSA was an assessment tool to facilitate learning and teaching. Besides, the EDB had removed TSA from "Key Performance Measures" for primary schools with a view to alleviating schools' concerns about the risks involved in the use of assessment data.
  - To generate greater publicity, the EDB was producing a resource kit for "assessment for learning", which would be provided for school management to promote parent education at school. Given the close connection between schools and parents, the positive message of "assessment for learning" would

be better put across if schools arranged briefings on assessment in light of school context.

- The EDB would be delighted to send officers to schools for organising parent education seminars so as to enhance parents' assessment literacy and clarify misunderstandings about assessment.

## **2. Hidden worries about TSA:**

- Participants were worried that students could not enjoy learning because of the pressure induced by assessment.
- Participants enquired if it was absolutely necessary to obtain assessment data of all students in the territory.
- Participants remarked that teachers should provide education in light of the learning needs of students.
- Response from speakers:
  - TSA carried out on a sampling basis could only provide reports at the territory-wide level but could not offer feedback at the school level. TSA was a formative assessment, which enabled schools to take follow-up actions and adjust learning and teaching arrangements.
  - Schools might not use TSA data for publicity purposes because the assessment reports did not show the attainment rates of a particular school but only the correct response rates. This was indeed the purpose of TSA, i.e. enabling teachers to adjust teaching arrangements having regard to assessment data.
  - The EDB was always concerned about pressure and drilling. Mechanical drilling of doing repeated exercises was not advised because students' learning should be consolidated through everyday teaching. Usually, for students who got low scores, teachers would keep giving exercises to help them improve. Such a teaching practice, however, could not address the learning difficulties of students.
  - Teachers' assessment literacy should be enhanced to help students improve the areas where they underperformed. Through assessment, teachers could identify the learning difficulties of students and thus improve teaching strategies. The feedback of assessment could help address the problem of drilling.
  - Schools needed an objective tool (i.e. TSA) to provide teachers with a clearer direction to grasp the progress and effectiveness of different key learning stages and learning processes. In this way, teachers would be more confident to have further reflection to provide feedback to teaching for

the following key learning stage. Exercising professional judgement, teachers would make use of assessment data to identify the learning difficulties of students in order to facilitate learning for the benefit of students.

**Seminars for School Managers and Parents in the 18 Districts  
(Island District)**

Date: 27 February 2017 (Monday)  
Time: 6:30-8:30 pm  
Venue: Po On Commercial Association Wa Ho Kan Primary School

**Summary:**

**1. Administrative arrangements:**

- Participants had favourable comments about TSA and considered that the difficulties in the implementation process were caused by a lack of communication.
- Participants enquired if the EDB had sufficient resources to support schools when the 2017 Research Study was extended to all primary schools in the territory.
- Participants enquired if schools needed to submit to the EDB a list of students absent from the BCA.
- Response from speakers:
  - As the public had to know more about assessment, the EDB had strengthened communication with different stakeholders (e.g. school managers, school heads, teachers and parents) so as to enhance their understanding of the objectives and functions of “assessment for learning”.
  - Schools attached great importance to the views of parents, and parents might approach schools if they had queries so as to clear up misunderstandings.
  - The EDB had sufficient resources to provide different kinds of support services for schools. The allocation of resources would not be affected even if all schools in the territory received school-based support services.
  - Schools did not need to submit to the EDB the list of absentees. Schools would handle students’ absence on assessment days following the usual procedures.

**2. Paper and item design:**

- Parents considered that the EDB had made improvements to TSA but they worried that the items might become more and more difficult, leading to the recurrence of the drilling problem.
- Response from speakers:

- More than 50 schools participated in the 2016 Tryout Study. Participating schools had positive feedback about the 2016 Tryout Study and considered that the refined assessment items could align with the Basic Competencies of Primary 3 students.
- The Committee had put forward different views on the 2016 Tryout Study. The EDB would consider its views in detail and members of the public were welcome to access the report uploaded on the EDB website.
- A committee consisting of scholars from tertiary institutions, frontline teachers and so forth was established by the HKEAA to set items for the assessed subjects. With professional judgement, such stakeholders were mainly responsible for designing items and examining their appropriateness. With the monitoring of different stakeholders, the assessment items could align with the Basic Competencies of students.

**Seminars for School Managers and Parents in the 18 Districts  
(Sai Kung District)**

Date: 27 February 2017 (Monday)  
Time: 6:30-8:30 pm  
Venue: Chi Lin Buddhist Primary School

**Summary:**

**1. Pressure induced by assessment on schools:**

- Participants stated that schools could opt for a report type that showed the standards of a particular school against the territory-wide standards, and this would create pressure on schools and entail vicious competition. In addition, participants enquired if assessment data would continue to be used to assess schools because some regional school development officers used to put schools under pressure on account of their performance in TSA.
- Response from speakers:
  - The Regional Education Offices were in partnership with schools. The Education Officers of such offices would actively maintain liaison with schools so as to grasp their development direction and share experiences with them. The EDB would not use data of school reports to exert pressure on schools.
  - Schools ceased operation for different reasons. The EDB had never used TSA data to force “closure of schools” as claimed by some.
  - There were four types of reports that schools might opt for in light of school context under the 2016 Tryout Study. One of them only showed the attainment rates of a particular school without the attainment rates at the territory-wide level, which should be able to help lessen pressure for making comparison.
  - The Committee on Home-School Co-operation and Federations of Parent-Teacher Associations in various districts jointly issued an initiative in January, which acknowledged that instead of inviting comparison among schools, assessment data in school reports could provide feedback to teaching and learning. It was hoped that the strongly entrenched culture of competition could gradually change through parent education.

## **2. TSA dominating learning and teaching:**

- Participants indicated that TSA could be comparable to the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination (DSE), reflecting that education in Hong Kong was examination-oriented. Meanwhile, item design of schools' internal examinations was based on the assessment items of TSA. Thus, students were weighed down by numerous exercises and internal assessments.
- Response from speakers:
  - The EDB reaffirmed that TSA was not a public examination, which was not intended to assess results of individual students and rank or screen schools. The assessment data was only used to provide feedback to learning and teaching. These functions were different from that of DSE.
  - On the issue of homework, according to a survey in 2015, for a particular class of students in a particular primary school, the difference in the time spent on homework could be as much as five hours. This was because students varied in ability. Hence, limiting the amount of homework for schools is not a feasible solution.
  - As compared with the previous TSA, there were remarkable improvements in the design and quantity of items under the 2016 Tryout Study. The items could better align with the requirements of Basic Competency.

## **3. 2017 Research Study:**

- Participants enquired if students could participate in the 2017 Research Study on a voluntary basis.
- Response from speakers:
  - The 2017 Research Study was not a public examination, and it would be conducted on normal school days. Schools would handle students' absence according to the established procedures.

## **Seminars for School Managers and Parents in the 18 Districts (North District)**

Date: 28 February 2017 (Tuesday)  
Time: 6:30-8:30 pm  
Venue: HHCKLA Buddhist Chan Shi Wan Primary School

### **Summary:**

#### **1. Issues relating to overall curriculum goals:**

- Participants enquired if the curriculum goals could be shared with parents.
- Response from speakers:
  - Schools would establish the overall curriculum goals based on their professional judgement, and formulate school-based assessment and homework policies in line with their mission and vision, the needs of students, etc.
  - The EDB and schools would regularly arrange parent education seminars to have exchanges with parents on such issues as parenting skills and school policies (e.g. policies on assessment and homework). Schools' arrangements in this regard were quite transparent. Given varying contexts of different schools, parents were advised to get more information from the schools of their children so that they could know better how to support their children.

#### **2. Issue of drilling:**

- Participants were concerned that the continuous implementation of assessments would again give rise to drilling, and enquired what specific measures would be taken by the EDB to avert drilling.
- Response from speakers:
  - The Committee would continue to keep a close watch on the issue of drilling. The EDB always stressed that monotonous and mechanical drilling was meaningless to learning, and it was a practice at government schools not to purchase supplementary exercises for TSA. The EDB hoped that such measures would help reduce the incentives for drilling.
  - Meanwhile, the EDB would organise different kinds of seminars to strengthen public education, enhancing the community's understanding of the intentions and functions of "assessment for learning".



- A committee comprising academics from tertiary institutions, frontline teachers, etc. was established under the HKEAA for setting assessment items. When setting assessment items, the committee would make reference to the 2016 Tryout Study and ensure that the items aligned with Basic Competencies of Primary 3 students.
- TSA was neither a scheme to groom high achievers nor a tool for ranking schools. TSA data enabled schools to find out why some students could not meet standards and thus develop effective teaching programmes and activities to enhance learning and teaching.

**Seminars for School Managers and Parents in the 18 Districts  
(Tai Po District)**

Date: 1 March 2017 (Wednesday)  
Time: 6:30-8:30 pm  
Venue: Tai Po Baptist Public School

**Summary:**

**1. 2017 Research Study:**

- There are system assessments all around the world. Participants enquired about the features and positioning of TSA as compared with system assessments in other places.
- Response from speakers:
  - The design of BCA aligned with the local curriculum, and all Basic Competencies were within the scope of the curriculum.
  - BCA data enabled schools to provide feedback to teaching and help teachers improve teaching practices by identifying the overall strengths and weaknesses of students. Schools might also apply for support services to meet the needs of students, and assist teachers in selecting training programmes so that they could provide feedback to learning and teaching by acting on the EDB's advice and the experience of other schools.

**Seminars for School Managers and Parents in the 18 Districts  
(Sham Shui Po District)**

Date: 3 March 2017 (Friday)  
Time: 6:30-8:30 pm  
Venue: Kowloon Technical School

**Summary:**

**1. Administrative arrangements:**

- Participants enquired how the assessments would be conducted and whether students needed to do any preparation.
- Response from speakers:
  - Speaking assessments would be carried out in mid-May, in which only students randomly selected would participate.
  - Written assessments of Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics for all Primary 3 and Primary 6 students would be conducted in mid-June. The assessment for each subject would last for 25 to 30 minutes. Students of other grades would have lessons as usual.
  - Students would not need to do any preparation for the assessments because what to be assessed was the Basic Competencies of a particular key learning stage.

**2. Less stress and more confidence for students:**

- Participants enquired what could be done to help students cope with negative emotions and pressure arising from TSA, and boost their confidence in assessment.
- Response from speakers:
  - TSA was a low-stake assessment. It would neither provide assessment results of individual students nor affect students' ranking in schools and the allocation of Secondary 1 school places.
  - Schools might make reference to assessment reports to facilitate learning and teaching by following up on the performance of Primary 3 students and helping them improve in areas where they performed less well.
  - The EDB was aware of parents' worries and hoped that parents would learn more about BCA. As such, the EDB had organised different kinds of seminars to strengthen public education, enhancing stakeholders'

understanding of the intentions and functions of “assessment for learning”.

- Emphasising the importance of communication between parents and schools, the EDB suggested that parents might get more information from schools about the implementation of policies (including those on assessment and homework).
- BCA data enabled schools to adjust the curriculum and pedagogical methods and raise the quality of teaching so that students could learn in a more systematic manner.

### **3. Implications for assessment policies arising from political developments:**

- Participants enquired if TSA would be suspended in the next school year on account of the election manifesto of the Chief Executive candidates.
- Response from speakers:
  - It was not possible to predict the result of the Chief Executive election. The EDB would, as planned, extend the 2016 Tryout Study to all primary schools in the territory.
  - Research findings of the 2016 Tryout Study showed that stakeholders had positive feedback on the four initiatives for enhancement. This year, the EDB would continue collecting views of stakeholders to refine the assessment arrangements.
  - BCA aimed to gauge Primary 3 students’ attainment of Basic Competencies upon completing the first key learning stage. It was an effective assessment tool in providing feedback to learning and teaching and helping students to learn.

**Seminars for School Managers and Parents in the 18 Districts  
(Yau Tsim Mong District)**

Date: 10 March 2017 (Friday)  
Time: 6:30-8:30 pm  
Venue: C.C.C. Heep Woh Primary School

**Summary:**

**1. Comments on TSA and suggestions on its assessment modes:**

- Participants indicated that some students had much greater confidence after undertaking the English speaking assessments of TSA, and that speaking and listening assessments could help enhance students' abilities in these two areas.
- Participants put forward the following suggestions on the assessment modes of TSA:
  - Online assessments with multiple choice questions should be adopted so that students good at problem-solving but rather weak at writing could be properly assessed.
  - A large assessment item bank should be established, from which items could be extracted for assessments. Upon assessments, detailed assessment data for individual students should be provided for schools or parents to take follow-up actions.
  - Assessments should be conducted on an annual basis for Primary 3 to Primary 6 students.
- Response from speakers:
  - STAR is an online assessment item bank, capable of assessing through a computer system the performance of participating students and generating instant assessment reports for teachers' reference. It enables teachers to make good use of assessment information to promote student learning.
  - Different assessments served different purposes. TSA aimed to provide overall assessment data to facilitate learning and teaching. In addition, TSA only assessed whether students were able to acquire Basic Competences and it could not identify differences among students who had already acquired Basic Competencies.
  - The suggestion of conducting assessments on an annual basis for Primary 3 to Primary 6 students could be submitted to the Committee for further consideration.

## **2. Unified standard assessments:**

- Participants enquired why the EDB could not arrange unified standard assessments for all students.
- Response from speakers:
  - TSA was an assessment for all Primary 3, Primary 6 and Secondary 3 students.

## **3. TSA data as a basis of schools' value-added data:**

- Participants suggested that the EDB might prepare and release value-added data of schools based on TSA data so that parents would recognise schools' achievements in helping students to progress.
- Response from speakers:
  - The EDB had prepared value-added data based on data gathered from the Pre-S1 HKAT and DSE for the reference of secondary schools.
  - Value-added data could not be made available for primary schools because there was no unified standard assessment at the Primary 1 level.

## **4. Stress experienced by students in study:**

- A participant stated that a school distributed in July learning materials to prospective Primary 1 students for ranking purposes. Parents were aware that the school placed heavy emphasis on drilling, which put both students and parents under tremendous pressure.
- Participants suggested that to put all involved at ease, the EDB should make the purposes of TSA data more transparent by stressing that such data was not used for competition purposes.
- Response from speakers:
  - The curriculum reforms for kindergarten education stressed self-care and self-learning abilities but not academic results. The EDB also recommended that schools should not arrange too many assessments for Primary 1 students in the first school term so that they could find it easier to adapt to primary school life. Parents were encouraged to express their concern to parent-teacher associations and schools if assessments were given weight too early.
  - The EDB and schools would strengthen parent education, enabling parents to understand that children's learning needs were not confined to study and their potential in other aspects should be developed.
  - The EDB would enhance the assessment literacy of school management

committees, school heads and teachers so that assessment data would be properly applied to provide feedback to learning and teaching.

**Seminars for School Managers and Parents in the 18 Districts  
(Tsuen Wan District)**

Date: 10 March 2017 (Friday)  
Time: 6:30-8:30 pm  
Venue: Si Yuan School of the Precious Blood

**Summary:**

Participants realised the content of the seminar.



## **Seminars for School Managers and Parents in the 18 Districts (Sha Tin District)**

Date: 17 March 2017 (Friday)  
Time: 6:30-8:30 pm  
Venue: Sha Tin Wai Dr. Catherine F. Woo Memorial School

### **Summary:**

#### **1. Purposes of TSA:**

- Participants enquired why the Primary 3 level was taken as the end of the first key learning stage and why all students at that level had to acquire Basic Competencies. Participants also enquired why assessment analysis could not be made on the basis of the specific circumstances of individual classes and students so that teachers could know what should be taught to students.
- Response from speakers:
  - Primary 1 to Primary 3 were the first learning stage. Understanding the performance of students in completing the relevant learning stages would help follow up on the weaknesses of the students and help them learn better in the next learning stage.
  - TSA was one of the many assessment tools. Instead of assessing the performance of individual schools, students or teachers, TSA enabled schools to grasp the overall learning performance of students. By making reference to school reports, schools could adjust their overall teaching support initiatives and curriculum arrangements and identify students' learning difficulties, so as to help students prepare for the following key learning stage and thus learn effectively without additional support.
  - Covering a diverse range of areas, assessments comprised classroom learning, discussions with students, schools' internal examinations, public examinations and international examinations. Schools wished to collect different sorts of information for formulating teaching strategies and measures, with a view to helping students learn effectively and enabling teachers, parents and students to evaluate the effectiveness of learning.

#### **2. Drilling induced by TSA:**

- Participants were concerned that the public would associate TSA with drilling because of their negative impression about it.

- Response from speakers:
- The EDB had, in the light of the Committee's views and suggestions, refined the design of assessment items used in the 2016 Tryout Study to meet students' learning needs.
  - According to 50 odd schools participating in the 2016 Tryout Study, their students found the assessments manageable without drilling because what was assessed was part of students' daily learning.
  - As some assessment items were still relatively tricky, the EDB would continue reviewing the design and contents of assessment items to ensure that future assessments would align with the Basic Competency of Primary 3 students and no extra drilling would be arranged by schools.
  - Every school had its unique circumstances. Students studying in the same school and the same learning environment might still differ in how well they learned. Meanwhile, school had assessment and homework policies in place to help students learn effectively.

**2017 Basic Competency Assessment Research Study**  
**CNY Gathering cum Exchange Meeting with Primary School Heads**

Date: 8 February 2017 (Wednesday)  
Time: 9:30 am – 12:00 nn  
Venue: W301, West Block, EDB Kowloon Tong Education Services Centre

**Summary:**

**1. Mode of assessment of the oral (group discussion) and Chinese audio-visual (CAV) assessments for Chinese Language**

- Participants were concerned about the assessment modes of the oral (group discussion) and CAV assessments in the Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA).
- Response from speakers:
  - The original purpose of introducing group discussion was to hope that schools would enhance students' self-confidence and ability to get along with others by encouraging them to engage in different speaking and interaction activities with peers and through various modes.
  - CAV assessment is a timely process of teaching which allows students to further grasp and record related information in various forms, the EDB will further explore the assessment mode.

**2. Time arrangements of TSA and schools' internal year-end examination**

- Participants accepted TSA's validity, but TSA is often held too close to the schools' internal year-end examination. It is hoped that the impact on schools regarding the implementation of TSA can be minimised.
- Response from speakers:
  - The EDB will discuss with the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority on the issue of time arrangements.

**3. Attainment criteria in TSA**

- Participants wanted to understand EDB's criteria for gauging students' attainment level.
- Response from speakers:
  - TSA is an objective, reliable and valid assessment on students' Basic Competencies in Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics upon completion of the three key learning stages (i.e. Primary 3, Primary 6 and Secondary 3 levels). Determining whether or not a student attained Basic Competency was based on the standards set in 2004, including the

setting of standards, maintaining standards and the assessment of the students' ability. In order to maintain the standards of Basic Competency, the HKEAA conducted research tests to ensure that the stability and consistency.

**4. Enhancement of professional autonomy:**

- Participants suggested allowing schools to choose 'sampling' or 'comprehensive' mode of implementing Basic Competency Assessment (BCA).
- Response from speakers:
  - Different schools are of different sizes. If it is implemented on a 'sampling' basis, the school reports will not be comprehensive. Meanwhile, administrative arrangements of schools have to be taken into account. If parents are allowed to choose to participate in the assessment or not before they fully understand the rationale of the assessment, this will constitute more nuisance to schools.

**5. Arrangements for school-based support:**

- Participants were concerned whether the EDB could provide sufficient manpower to support the frontline teachers in the full implementation of BCA.
- Response from speakers:
  - Approximately 400 schools are under different support services in different forms (including language learning support services, collaboration projects between tertiary institutions and schools, district-based workshops, etc.). The EDB has sufficient staff to provide support services for schools, and it is expected to enhance the effectiveness of learning and teaching through school-based support services.

**6. Arrangements for BCA in future:**

- Participants were concerned that the implementation of BCA would become complicated and changeable, as the candidates of the Chief Executive Election could use this as a political consideration which would induce pressure and risk to the EDB.
- Response from speakers:
  - The EDB attaches great importance to the professional views of the education sector. With the current political situation, regardless of the changes, the EDB still encourages the sector to express the importance of BCA or TSA to schools through various channels, to form a basis for the EDB to come up with an accurate reflection.

**2017 Basic Competency Assessment Research Study**  
**Focus Group Meetings**  
**Assessment Design & Question Papers**  
**Summary Report**

### **Target Groups**

The Education Assessment Services Division (EASD) of the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) organised a total of 12 focus group meetings (FGMs) (4 FGMs per subject) in four regions (Kowloon, Hong Kong and Islands, New Territories East and New Territories West). These were scheduled for mid-June 2017, immediately after the written assessment in the 2017 Research Study.

### **Mode and Focus of Meeting**

The FGMs consisted of 2 hours of semi-structured questions and responses. The focus of the meetings was as follows:

1. Assessment design
2. Item difficulty
3. School preparation for the 2017 Research Study
4. Reporting

### **Overview**

An overview of the FGMs where major issues were discussed and views from the school representatives were given as follows:

#### **1. Primary 3 Chinese Language**

The assessment design for the Chinese Language Assessment of the 2017 Research Study was based on the recommendations of the Working Group on Papers and Question Design under the Committee.

##### **1.1 Improved Assessment Design of P.3 Chinese Language**

- The number of texts in the reading assessment had been reduced from three to two.
- The total number of words per sub-paper had been limited to 1,200 and the total number of items had been limited to 20.

- Practical writing was only included in one of the reading sub-papers to avoid giving undue weight to practical writing.
- In the writing assessment, certain information required for practical writing was provided, such as salutation, complimentary close, greetings and date of a letter, etc.
- The marking criteria on the format of practical writing had been adjusted.
- Student exemplars demonstrating the attainment of Basic Competency were provided as needed.
- “Five-options-choose-two” items, items requiring “reverse thinking” and so forth in each paper were reviewed and adjusted.

## **1.2 Views on P.3 Chinese Language Assessment Design**

### **a) P.3 Chinese Reading Assessment**

- Teachers were satisfied with the overall design of the reading assessment.
- The number of texts in the reading assessment was reduced from three to two. The total number of words per sub-paper had been limited to 1,200. A majority of teachers found these adjustments appropriate and believed students would be able to complete the assessment and check their answers within the time given.
- Teachers stated that the passages had been shortened. The difficulty level of questions was lower, and the vocabulary used was easier than in previous years. They stated that students generally should be able to answer the questions based on the reading passages provided. Also, some teachers pointed out that this difficulty level of questions would not require students to have extra drilling.
- Teachers found the question types to be suitable for the level of P.3 students. Students were given cues showing where they could get the answers in a specified paragraph when answering vocabulary items. Items assessing sequencing were put at the beginning of the reading paper. The number of items “requiring reverse thinking” had been reduced to one among the four sub-papers. Teachers were satisfied with these arrangements.
- A teacher suggested using question booklets and answer booklets so that students need not flip the pages while answering the reading questions.

- A couple of teachers requested a reading paper exclusively designed for non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students.

b) P.3 Chinese Listening Assessment

- Teachers were satisfied with the overall design of the listening assessment, which aligned with the requirements of Basic Competencies of P.3 students and students' daily life experiences.
- Teachers found the question types suitable for students (absence of "five-option-choose-two" items and items requiring "reverse thinking") and the content of the tapescripts was largely appropriate; one teacher stated that the first part was concise and the second part was more informative.
- Most teachers opined that the topics and vocabulary used in the listening assessment suited the level of P.3 students.
- Teachers' views on whether the assessment materials should be played once or twice varied. Most teachers stated that it was sufficient for students to listen to the materials once. A few mentioned that the number of repetitions required depended on the complexity and difficulty of the materials. A couple of teachers proposed that students should be allowed to read the questions first and then listen to the content twice. The questions and options did not need to be read aloud because they were straightforward. However, some opined that reading the questions and options aloud be continued while a couple of teachers stated that questions assessing intonation recognition be played twice.
- A few teachers mentioned that NCS students would find the listening assessment challenging.

c) P.3 Chinese Audio-visual Assessment

- Teachers were largely satisfied with the overall design of the Chinese audio-visual (CAV) assessment, and felt that it suited the level of P.3 students and their daily life experiences.
- Teachers opined that some of the Basic Competencies assessed in the CAV assessment overlapped with those in the listening assessment. One teacher mentioned that only either one skill was required to assess. The HKEAA

representative responded that the testing point “able to understand simple audio-visual information” was based on the curriculum document.

- A few teachers mentioned that the speed of the voice-overs was too fast. Teachers also opined that the speed of the voice-overs in Putonghua version was fast. The HKEAA representative responded that the speed of Putonghua version had been adjusted and its completion duration was already longer than that of the Cantonese version. Besides, NCS students were provided a version of CD with questions and options read aloud.
- Teachers opined that the topics and vocabulary used in the CAV assessment were not so common among P.3 students.
- A minority of teachers suggested the video clip be played twice. The procedures were: i) viewing the questions before viewing the video clip and answering the questions; ii) viewing the video clip the second time and checking all answers. Some said this arrangement facilitated students’ grasp of ideas from the video clip while the HKEAA representative raised her concern that the assessment time would be extended.
- A teacher proposed that the questions with pictures be placed on the same page and the pictures could be made smaller. Students need not flip the page over.

d) P.3 Chinese Writing Assessment

- Students were given 400 boxes (instead of the previous 850 boxes) in which to answer the writing paper. This arrangement was welcomed by teachers who mentioned that this amendment eliminated much of the stress felt by students.
- Teachers found the topics used were suitable for the level of P.3 students and were satisfied that part of the format had been provided to students for practical writing.
- A teacher opined that asking students at Key Stage 1 to write a greeting card or an invitation card might not suit the students’ daily experiences.
- The marking criteria on ‘practical writing’ items had been adjusted from 4 levels to 3 levels. Most teachers stated that the adjustment was suitable and aligned with the requirements of Basic Competencies of P.3 students. However a few mentioned that the adjustment was not so useful. They felt



that most students were able to get Level 2 or Level 3 in practical writing and so the adjustment was not able to inform learning and teaching. The HKEAA responded that the purpose of the assessment was to enable teachers to have a grasp whether their students have attained the Basic Competencies and to reduce incentives for over-drilling.

- The reduction in marking criteria for the “content” and “structure” in short text writing from 5 levels to 4 levels was welcomed. This amendment also aligned with the requirements of Basic Competencies of P.3 students. A teacher mentioned that the exemplars of good performances provided should be adjusted due to this amendment.
- Some teachers commented that the writing items should be diversified, e.g. topic writing, picture writing, continuing a story, items with pictorial cues. The diversity of items could stimulate students to think while writing.
- A couple of teachers opined that students were in a rush to complete two pieces of writing in 40 minutes. They suggested that an extra 5 to 10 minutes be given.
- A teacher suggested a separate set of writing marking criteria be provided for NCS students.

e) P.3 Chinese Speaking Assessment

- A majority of teachers found that the topics were suitable for students at P.3 level and were related to their daily life experiences.
- A couple of teachers suggested a change in marking criteria for speaking from 5 levels to 4 levels. They further suggested that for “group interactions”, one or two verbal clues should be given to the ‘weak’ students.
- A few teachers suggested that the oral examiners read aloud the topic to NCS students before they started telling a story. They felt this would help NCS students to a large extent.
- A couple of teachers opined that some NCS students might not grasp the Chinese creeds and customs, e.g. celebrating Chinese New Year, giving red packets.

### **1.3 Views on P.3 Chinese Language Item Suitability**

- Most teachers stated that the items in Reading, Listening, CAV, Writing and Speaking Assessments are suitable for students at P.3 level. They felt that compared to the items in previous TSA years, the 2017 items were simpler and more straightforward and that ‘tricky’ items were absent.

## **2. Primary 3 English Language**

### **2.1 Improved Assessment Design of P.3 English Language**

The assessment design for the English Language Assessment of the 2017 Research Study was based on the recommendations of the Working Group on Papers and Question Design under the Committee.

- The number of parts in the reading assessment had been reduced from four to three.
- The length of each reading task limited to 150 words and the length of the whole paper had been properly capped at 400 words.
- To help students manage the assessment time for the reading and writing paper, invigilators should announce the time twice during the assessment, i.e. 15 minutes and 5 minutes before the end of assessment.
- Items expecting answers in the past tense in the writing assessment had been scrapped (i.e. writing a recount).
- Assessment items on basic book concepts were to be avoided.

### **2.2 Views on P.3 English Language Assessment Design**

Teachers in general considered that the current arrangement of the assessment was fine. However, some invigilating teachers observed that some students were tired after completing the assessments. They felt that:

#### **a) P.3 English Listening Assessment**

- The listening tasks were related to students’ daily life experiences, i.e. they were authentic.
- The question format of a couple of items might be challenging to some students. For example, an item required students to read some short phrases and identify the correct answer as “3 and 4”.

- The length of the listening papers (about 20 minutes) was appropriate for P.3 students but a few suggested that the P.3 listening assessment should be shortened.
- The speed of the speakers in the listening tasks was appropriate to P.3 students.

b) P.3 English Reading Assessment

- The topics of the reading tasks were familiar to P.3 students because they were authentic and related to their daily life experiences. The topics (e.g. time) were within the curriculum.
- The reading tasks were of appropriate level for P.3 students. The reading load of each paper was found to be suitable.
- The “reading load” progressively increased as one went through the paper. Teachers found this arrangement appropriate.
- The total number of reading items (about 20) in each paper was appropriate for P.3 students.
- The reading tasks covered a variety of text types all of which were within the P.3 curriculum.
- Pictorial cues given in the reading texts were useful to students in understanding the texts.
- Invigilating teachers reported that students had made good use of the assessment time to work on the assessment. The majority of students had enough time to complete the assessment.

c) P.3 English Writing Assessment

- The writing topics were familiar to students, e.g. ‘at the park’.
- The question prompts and word prompts given to the students in the writing tasks were found to be clear, useful and appropriate. Students were able to complete the task by providing an ending.
- The pictorial cues were helpful to students, especially to students unfamiliar with the key words given (e.g. the recess time clearly was marked with the word ‘Recess’ of a school timetable).
- The first sentence/phrase should be provided to students in the writing tasks to help them start writing.

- One teacher opined that the meaning of the question mark ‘?’ given in the mind map was not clear to students. It was suggested that the question mark should be replaced by ‘you may use your own ideas’.

d) P.3 English Speaking Assessment

- The topics of the speaking papers were familiar to P.3 students and the vocabulary used in the reading texts consisted of words common in the curriculum. The sentence patterns were also simple and easy for students. The images in the “Picture Description” component were clear. However, some students were nervous during the assessment.

## **2.3 Views on P.3 English Language Item Difficulty**

a) P.3 English Listening Assessment

Generally, teachers felt that:

- The listening tasks were of appropriate level for P.3 students. The listening items were straightforward and easy for P.3 students. No “tricky” items were found. Students in general could manage the assessment well and were at ease when doing the assessment.
- The artwork in the listening tasks was clear to students. However, the picture of a person with the facial expression of “surprised” might not be familiar to students.
- The vocabulary used in the listening tapescripts and the listening items was familiar to P.3 students. One teacher opined that the word ‘author’ might not be familiar to students.
- It was a good arrangement to have the story divided into parts so that the students would be able to follow the development of the story.

b) P.3 English Reading Assessment

Generally, teachers felt that:

- The reading tasks were of appropriate level for P.3 students.
- The reading tasks were authentic and the length of the reading texts was appropriate. The vocabulary used was straightforward and easy.
- The reading items were straightforward and easy. No “tricky” items were found. Students were confident when doing the assessments.
- The layout of the reading texts was clear and easy to read. The picture options for multiple choice items were clear to the students.

- The items set on pronoun references were good because the pronouns were put close to the subjects by which they referred. Others felt that these items might be challenging to some students.

### **3. Primary 3 Mathematics**

The assessment design for the Mathematics Assessment of the 2017 Research Study was based on the recommendations of the Working Group on Papers and Question Design under the Committee.

#### **3.1 Improved Assessment Design of P.3 Mathematics**

- The number of items had been reduced, with an immediate cut of around 20%.
- Only one Basic Competency was assessed in each item.
- Items requiring solving linking problems had been minimised.

#### **3.2 Views on P.3 Mathematics Assessment Design**

- The assessment design incorporating different item types for each dimension of Mathematics was suitable for P.3 students.
- The number of questions was reduced to 33, which was appropriate. All students finished within 30 minutes.
- The total score of each sub-paper was about 20% less than that in 2015.
- Containers with 2, 5 or 10 graduations (as shown in Q24/3M4) were easier for P.3 students to read the quantity.
- 40 minutes' assessment time was appropriate for P.3 students to check their answers carefully.
- Standard 3-D shapes were suitable for students to identify prisms/cylinders, pyramids/cones and spheres (for instance, Q26/3M2).
- The time allowed of the sub-papers should be evaluated after collecting more information from the assessment.
- 40 minutes was adequate for students to complete and check their answers in each sub-paper.
- Items with the north direction NOT pointing upward were acceptable (for instance, pointing to the right in Q31/3M3).

- It was appropriate to use the same scale in those items for students to compare the weight of objects, for instance, 1 kg graduations used in Q23/3M1.

### **3.3 Views on P.3 Mathematics Item Difficulty**

- The Mathematics items were straightforward.
- The level of difficulty of all items was appropriate for P.3 students.
- All items were set according to the Basic Competency documents for the end of Key Stage 1.
- Almost all students (including students with special educational needs) were able to complete within 30 minutes although the time allotment was 40 minutes. Students used 20 minutes on average.
- The design of various item types was suitable for motivating P.3 students.
- It was suitable to use standard 3-D shapes in the items for students to identify and group 3-D shapes.
- The difficulty level of items with the north direction NOT pointing upward was appropriate, for instance, Q31/3M3.
- There were no ‘overly tricky questions’ in the Mathematics papers.

## **4. Views on School Preparation for 2017 Research Study**

### **4.1 P.3 Chinese Language**

#### **a) Purchase of supplementary exercises**

- Most teachers mentioned that no supplementary exercise books aimed at preparing 2017 TSA were bought.
- Some teachers did mention that supplementary exercises being bought were used to consolidate what students had learned in class. Some of them mentioned that the use of supplementary exercises was for holiday assignments. They stressed that the use of supplementary exercises was not for over-drilling but for practice on a regular basis.
- One teacher actually admitted that her school did drill P.3 students for TSA (using more supplementary exercises than those were used in P.4 and P.5). However, they stopped this practice in mid-term in the face of media pressure.

b) Conduct of extra/remedial/drilling classes before the assessment

- Teachers stated that students were trained for the group interaction in the Speaking Assessment since students found it challenging.
- Teachers had asked students to do CAV and Speaking Assessments (with the same layout and procedures as in the live assessment) as mock practice in order to get students familiar with the assessment format and procedures.

## **4.2 P.3 English Language**

a) Purchase of supplementary exercises

- Some teachers mentioned that they would continue to buy supplementary exercises in future as it was the existing practice. The supplementary exercises served different purposes (e.g. preparation of BCA/TSA, raise students' academic results).

b) Conduct of extra/remedial/drilling classes before the assessment

- Most teachers expressed that there were no extra lessons for the preparation of TSA in their schools. However, they had asked students to do past papers of TSA as mock practice in order to get students familiarise with the assessment format and procedures.
- Some teachers mentioned that there were remedial lessons for students to prepare for TSA.

## **4.3 P.3 Mathematics**

a) Purchase of supplementary exercises

- No school bought supplementary exercises for preparation of TSA. Only 1-2 past papers were used for revision before the assessment.
- Some schools downloaded the sub-papers of 2016 for practice by students. Only 2016 papers were used for familiarisation of the assessment items.
- Supplementary exercises aimed at TSA or drilling are not necessary as the TSA items are aligned with the requirement of Basic Competency and tied in with schools' daily teaching.
- One school expressed that students would only do their exercises in school with the assistance and support of teachers.

- Some schools designed worksheets for revision of previous topics or exercises to consolidate students' learning.
- Some schools will use supplementary exercises in 2017/18 academic year, but not to prepare for TSA. Teachers will merely select suitable exercises to cater for the needs of students and mechanical drilling is not used.

b) Conduct of extra/remedial/drilling classes before the assessment

- Most schools did not have any special or additional preparation for Mathematics before the conduct of TSA. No extra tutorial classes were necessary because all items are aimed at Basic Competency level.
- Some schools arranged remedial lessons for those students in need, not aimed at preparing for TSA.

## 5. Views on Reporting

There are four types of reports with different coverage available for the three subjects of the 2017 Research Study. These are based on the recommendations of the Working Group on Administration and Reporting under the Committee. Schools can select appropriate assessment reports, on a subject by subject basis.

Type of Report Format	Content
Report I – Existing Version	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School Report and Item Analysis Report</li> </ul>
Report II – Simplified version	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School Report and Item Analysis Report (only own school data is provided, without the data of all participating schools)</li> </ul>
Report III – Integrated version	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic Competency Report by Item Groups</li> <li>• School average vs participating schools' average on items under the same Basic Competency / question intent / learning unit and exemplars on student performances</li> </ul>
Report IV – Information Analysis Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each item is paired with its corresponding learning objective, Basic Competency and testing focus as well as analysis for each option in multiple choice items</li> </ul>



### **5.1 P.3 Chinese Language**

- Most teachers appreciated Report III – Integrated version (Basic Competency Report by Item Groups) and Report IV – Information Analysis Report for multiple-choice questions because they could help teachers analyse students’ strengths and weaknesses.
- Most teachers appreciated the Information Analysis Report (Report IV) for multiple-choice questions because it can lessen their workload and time to diagnose the students’ misconceptions. The information given in the report could facilitate teachers’ work on giving feedback to students and thus adjust learning and teaching.
- A teacher suggested adding teaching recommendations in Report IV.
- A couple of teachers reflected that since schools could select different medium of assessment for their students (i.e. Putonghua and Cantonese), it was proposed that two separate reports be given to schools, one on students using Cantonese and the other one on students using Putonghua.

### **5.2 P.3 English Language**

- Teachers opined that having four types of reports for schools meant that there was enough data/information available to them for reviewing students’ performances. They pointed out that Reports III and IV were particularly useful to them. Report IV helped to lessen teachers’ workload in analysing data.

### **5.3 P.3 Mathematics**

- Teachers appreciated the effort made by the HKEAA in this Research Study. They expressed the view that information provided was very comprehensive and useful for learning and teaching purposes.
- The 4 types of reports can cater for the different needs of schools and show the strengths and weaknesses of students’ performance in each dimension or learning unit. In particular student samples and distractors analysis could show the common mistakes made by students.

- Most teachers appreciated the Information Analysis Report (Report IV) for multiple-choice questions because it could help teachers diagnose the misconceptions of students and thus lessen their burden.
- A teacher suggested that the diagrams shown in Report III should display the data of past 3 years.
- It was suggested that options could be provided for schools to choose whether to show territory-wide percentage on the Information Analysis Report (Report IV) or not.
- It was suggested that online item analysis report (OIA) system could be enhanced in future and tailor-made data analysis for particular groups of items could be generated by schools.
- A teacher suggested adding the function of sorting the questions of past papers by Basic Competency or Learning Unit.

## **6. Other Issues**

- Teachers expressed the view that the STAR platform should be improved, with the functions such as sharing assessment tasks among different classes.
- Teachers proposed that the CAV assessment materials (including the video clips) be put on the BCA website. They found it difficult to obtain the CAV materials for students to practise with.
- Most of the participating teachers expressed that it was very difficult to select a good supplementary exercise. The level of difficulty of most commercial supplementary exercises was too high and deviated from the requirement of the curriculum. Almost all exercises contained mock TSA items and teachers had no choices even they did not want to choose such exercise books.
- One school teacher expressed that school-based support can deepen the understanding of how to use data in the assessment reports to develop and enhance school-based curriculum planning and learning activities.

## **7. Recommendations**

- A couple of teachers requested that clear guidelines be given by the EDB on handling whether or not students should participate in TSA. They expressed their views that their schools were caught in an embarrassing scenario between the EDB and parents. One teacher mentioned that only seven P.3 students in her class had participated in TSA.
- Some teachers stated that P.3 TSA should be held so that they know the learning needs of their students. However, a teacher opined that P.3 TSA should be scrapped since participation of other learning activities was affected by it.
- Some teachers suggested P.3 and P.6 assessments be conducted about one week later. A teacher suggested that TSA be postponed until early July as it overlapped with the assessment period of the school.
- It was suggested that assessment literacy should be enhanced not only to parents but the community as a whole.
- It was proposed that P.3 TSA should be held in alternate years.

Education Assessment Services Division  
 Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority  
 July 2017

**2017 Basic Competency Assessment Research Study**  
**Focus Group Meeting for Principals of Hong Kong Primary Schools**

Date: Monday, 3 July 2017  
Time: 2:00-4:15 pm  
Venue: Room 102, San Po Kong Office, Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority

**Summary**

**I. Introduction**

1. An Education Bureau (EDB) representative welcomed school representatives attending the focus group meeting (FGM). She stated that given the effectiveness of the 2016 Tryout Study, the EDB had accepted the recommendations of the Coordinating Committee on Basic Competency Assessment and Assessment Literacy (the Committee) in implementing the 2017 Research Study this year.
2. A Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) representative introduced the four major initiatives of the 2017 Research Study: (1) Improving assessment papers and item design; (2) Enhancing school reports; (3) Strengthening professional support measures; and (4) Including a questionnaire survey on students' learning attitude and motivation.
3. The EDB representative stated that the EDB would maintain close communication with schools participating in the 2017 Research Study and continue to collect views from various stakeholders. The schools were welcomed to express their opinions about the 2017 Research Study and assured that their views would be forwarded to the Committee for reference and consideration.

**II. Views from Participants**

**A. Administration Arrangements for the 2017 Research Study / Territory-wide System Assessment**

- A principal opined that the Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA) and school internal examinations complement each other. Otherwise, teachers would continue to adjust internal examinations according to the change of assessment format, thereby producing negative effects. Another principal stated that she would not follow blindly to adjust her school's internal examinations. She suggested that schools should teach in accordance with the teaching progress and the needs of the students.

- The principals in attendance had divided views on the dates for the written assessments. Therefore, views should be collected from all participating schools in the territory.

#### B. School Reports

- A principal said the assessment report is useful to teachers in understanding their students' areas of weaknesses and enhancing the reliability and validity of their own internal assessment.
- A principal stated that schools had perceived that pressure was induced by TSA since they had not understood its low-stake nature. Public concerns about TSA can be alleviated and TSA can be deployed as an essential tool to provide feedback on learning and teaching if factors inducing pressure can be removed.
- A principal said that a step-by-step approach should be adopted in order to improve teaching. She also said we cannot rely solely on a report to achieve this purpose. She was also worried that teachers are not equipped with enough training to cope with ever-changing teaching practice.
- Participants mentioned that students' performance might have an impact on the principal's perception of teachers.
- In order to render support to students with special educational needs (SEN), a principal suggested schools with SEN students should be given separate reports of SEN students' performance.

#### C. Assessment Items

- A principal stated that she had discussed the TSA items and students' performance with teachers and parents. Both teachers and parents mentioned that the assessment time was sufficient and that the assessment was simpler than school examinations. Another principal believed that internal school examinations can perform the same function as TSA in assessing students. One more principal mentioned that her teachers and parents commented that since the assessment had been adjusted to be easier than before, they did not see why there had been challenging items in the past.
- A principal expressed concerns about whether the assessment items could reflect students' learning. He also said that the reliability of the assessment is in doubt given the limited number of items assessed. However, another principal stated that since the HKEAA is a professional organisation in the educational assessment field, it could effectively assess the learning focus. Therefore, he trusted the results of the reports provided.

- A school representative stated that she had attended the Subject FGM. She appreciated the assessment in terms of item design, question types, topics, contents and choice of words. She said that they all aligned with textbooks and the teaching progress.

#### D. Communication with Stakeholders

- A principal mentioned that TSA has a psychological impact on teachers and questioned whether it might exert additional pressure on teachers and students. However, another principal stated that the improved assessment items do not put much pressure on students and that he had not received any comments on the assessment from parents.
- Some principals said many parents were affected by the information and comments on the 2017 Research Study from various sources and the media. Some even chose to let their children be absent on the assessment dates.

#### E. Future Development of the 2017 Research Study / TSA

- A principal said that parents and the community have differing views on the 2017 Research Study. It is important to establish a long term system with assessment criteria and acceptance.
- Some principals were concerned about the arrangements of the 2018 Primary 3 TSA. They suggested schools could opt for either sampling or whole-school assessment. However, other principals were worried that this would result in variations. They further indicated that the EDB and HKEAA had their own considerations and views in implementing the 2017 Research Study. They did not want to see schools' expectations lead to the assessment being off track from the original intent.

#### F. Others

- A principal hoped that the EDB could further address the related testing focus and the concrete description of the assessment in the curriculum guide.
- A principal stated that the EDB should enhance support to schools with undesirable results and thus avoid misallocation of resources.
- A principal hoped that more resources and support will be given to SEN students so that they will benefit more from their primary schooling.

**2017 Basic Competency Assessment Research Study**  
**Focus Group Meeting for School Heads of Hong Kong Primary Schools**

Date: Wednesday, 5 July 2017  
Time: 2:00 pm - 4:00 pm  
Venue: Room 102, San Po Kong Office, Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority

**Summary**

**I. Introduction**

1. An Education Bureau (EDB) representative welcomed school representatives attending the focus group meeting (FGM). She stated that given the effectiveness of the 2016 Tryout Study, the EDB had accepted the recommendations of the Coordinating Committee on Basic Competency Assessment and Assessment Literacy (the Committee) in implementing the 2017 Research Study this year.
2. A Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) representative introduced the four major initiatives of the 2017 Research Study: (1) Improving assessment papers and item design; (2) Enhancing school reports; (3) Strengthening professional support measures; and (4) Including a questionnaire survey on students' learning attitude and motivation.
3. The EDB representative stated that the EDB would maintain close communication with schools participating in the 2017 Research Study and continue to collect views from various stakeholders. The schools were welcomed to express their opinions about the 2017 Research Study and assured that their views would be forwarded to the Committee for reference and consideration.

**II. Views from Participants**

**A. Administration Arrangements for the 2017 Research Study / Territory-wide System Assessment**

Suggestions on the assessment dates of the written assessment from participants are given below:

- A school representative expressed concerns about the clash between Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA) held in mid-June and the dates of their internal examination. It was suggested that the TSA written assessment

should be arranged on a Thursday and a Friday with the fallback date scheduled for the following Monday, instead of taking up Tuesday and Wednesday (as per current practice). Schools would thus have greater flexibility in scheduling internal examinations.

- A school representative stated that the written assessment of TSA was conducted in mid-June and the school had to arrange the final examination in early June. Thus their teaching schedule was affected.
- A principal stated that TSA written assessment did not have any impact on the scheduling of internal examination in his school. Since the release of TSA written assessment dates was quite early, they could schedule their internal examination accordingly.
- A school teacher expressed the view that it would be better not to change the time of the TSA written assessment since schools and students had gotten used to it.
- A teacher stated that since the main purpose of TSA was to enable schools to obtain data about their students' learning, he queried whether schools could choose the dates to conduct the assessment (in regular lessons) within a set time period instead of on certain assigned dates. He added that such arrangement would be more flexible for schools.
- A principal said conducting the assessment in an open period of time would affect its reliability.
- A principal stated that whether or not TSA could be conducted in an open period largely depended on the overall assessment literacy of the schools. However, this could not be achieved by all schools.

#### B. Preparation for the 2017 Research Study

- Since there has been extensive public discussion on TSA over the last two years, various stakeholders had come to understand that the TSA was low-stake in nature and that the Basic Competencies were part of the curriculum. The school representatives indicated that they had not drilled students to prepare for the Research Study.
- A principal said that his school examinations were scheduled after the TSA written assessment. He said that this would benefit students since they would be better prepared for school examinations after taking the TSA written assessment.
- A principal commented that his school provided students with appropriate practice for speaking and listening components, since the formats of these two components were different from those of the school's internal assessment.



- A teacher stated that there were no queries from parents about the 2017 Research Study and the school sponsoring body hoped that the school could assign students less TSA exercises.

#### C. School Reports

- All school representatives stated that the information analysis report was useful in helping teachers understand the Basic Competency of students and giving them various types of data.
- Some school representatives hoped that the inclusion of the school Basic Competency attainment rates could be resumed in primary school reports. They held that the attainment rates were a key indicator with which to facilitate learning and teaching. They suggested that participating schools should be allowed to choose whether or not they wanted the attainment rates to be included in their individual school reports.
- Some school representatives suggested that schools with more than 5 students with special educational needs (SEN) could be given separate reports of SEN student performances. This arrangement could allow reference from the established report formats where schools with more than 5 non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students were given reports on NCS students' performance. Acceptance of this suggestion could enable schools to have a better understanding of students with varied learning needs and teaching strategies.

#### D. Assessment Items

- All school representatives agreed that the enhanced TSA items were better gauges of their students' performance relative to Basic Competency.
- A school representative questioned whether producing items with low difficulty level means improvement in the assessment items. He stated that the main point of improvement is not to make the items easier but to ensure students are positive about the assessment. He suggested adding high quality reading passages in the assessment.
- A school representative pointed out that the importance of the assessment lay in whether or not the assessment reflected students' Basic Competency, not the difficulty level of the assessment. Thus, it was crucial to ensure that the items corresponded to the Basic Competency.

#### E. Communication with Stakeholders

- As for the resources available for schools, a teacher stated that since the resource

kit materials were received in June, her school had planned to use them in the new academic year.

- School representatives stated that they had informed parents of the arrangement for the 2017 Research Study through school notices and there were no opposing views.
- Another principal said that some parents were worried that the 2017 Research Study might affect their children's results and the school had to explain this to them. He said some parents asked why students had to take the 2017 Research Study. He also stated that they explained to parents that the purpose of the 2017 Research Study is to provide schools with teaching reference materials on top of the school-based assessment.
- A principal stated that the parents of her school supported TSA. She said that it was necessary to explain the function of TSA and it was better to begin this communication with parents of Primary One students. She added that it is important to clarify the purpose and meaning of the 2017 Research Study to stakeholders.
- A teacher said it was undesirable to let parents choose whether or not to participate in the assessment; otherwise the reliability of the assessment would be impaired.
- A teacher pointed out that pressure on teachers comes from the school sponsoring body.

#### F. Questionnaire Survey on Non-academic Data

- A teacher said that the questionnaire on non-academic factors was overloaded with questions and it took time to complete it. Students had difficulty completing the questionnaire, so in the end her school principal decided not to participate. She added that the questionnaire involved a lot of personal information, such as socio-economic background of the students. Some parents might not want to provide such information. She also opined the questionnaire was lengthy for P.3 students; and teachers need to guide their students to fill in their responses.
- One teacher said that she did not understand the purpose of the questionnaire survey. The EDB representative replied that the purpose of the survey is to assist schools in identifying their strengths and weaknesses so that policies/support measures could be appropriately formulated. The EDB's message was conveyed via two seminars for school principals and general correspondence. The teacher agreed that the questionnaire survey had reference value.
- A principal explained that her school had taken part in the questionnaire survey

in 2015 so she already knew about the questionnaire. She further explained her school had joined another scheme by the Chinese University of Hong Kong and relevant socio-economic information of students was also collected. She believed the analysis was useful for school development.

G. Student Assessment Repository (STAR)

- A PSMCD pointed out that Web-based Learning and Teaching Support (WLTS) has been linked to Student Assessment Repository (STAR). WLTS also provides materials on ‘Other Learning Objectives’ for schools. She said that there are differences between Learning Progression Framework (LPF) and Basic Competency. She expected the LPF would be open to all schools.
- A school representative said her students like using STAR. She hoped there would be a greater variety of items available on the platform. She added that the platform was useful for teachers to conduct their own assessments as well as in-class quizzes, and response from her students was good.
- A principal mentioned that STAR was useful for helping teachers identify students’ strengths and weaknesses and thus provide follow-up to address certain topics.

**2017 Basic Competency Assessment Research Study**  
**Focus Group Meetings for Marking Personnel**  
**Assessment Design & Question Papers**  
**Summary Report**

## **Target Groups**

The Education Assessment Services Division (EASD) of the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) organised a total of 3 focus group meetings (FGMs) (1 FGM per subject) for marking personnel. These FGMs were scheduled for late July 2017, after the conduct of on-screen marking for the 2017 Research Study. The marking personnel<sup>25</sup> attending the FGMs included 3 chief examiners as well as 20 assistant examiners and 118 markers from 106 primary schools.

## **Mode and Focus of Meeting**

The FGMs consisted of 2 hours of semi-structured questions and responses. The focus of the meetings was as follows:

1. Assessment Design
2. Item difficulty
3. School preparation for the 2017 Research Study
4. Reporting

## **Overview**

An overview of the FGMs where major issues were discussed and views from the school representatives were given as follows:

### **1. Primary 3 Chinese Language**

The assessment design for the Chinese Language Assessment of the 2017 Research Study was based on the recommendations of the Working Group on Papers and Question Design under the Committee.

#### **1.1 Improved Assessment Design of P.3 Chinese Language**

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<sup>25</sup> Markers and assistant examiners were drawn from participating schools and appointed according to their order of merit in terms of the points system for selection. This system takes the applicant's academic qualifications and relevant teaching and marking experience into account.

- The number of texts in the reading assessment had been reduced from three to two.
- The total number of words per sub-paper had been limited to 1,200 and the total number of items had been limited to 20.
- Practical writing was only included in one of the reading sub-papers to avoid giving undue weight to practical writing.
- In the writing assessment, certain information required for practical writing was provided, such as salutation, complimentary close, greetings and date of a letter, etc.
- The marking criteria on the format of practical writing had been adjusted.
- Student exemplars demonstrating the attainment of basic competency were provided as needed.
- “Five-options-choose-two” items, items requiring “reverse thinking” and so forth in each paper were reviewed and adjusted.

## **1.2 Views on P.3 Chinese Language Assessment Design**

### **a) P.3 Chinese Reading Assessment**

- Teachers were satisfied with the overall design of the reading assessment: i.e. the number of texts in the reading assessment had been reduced from three to two; the total number of words per sub-paper had been limited to 1,200 and the total number of items had been limited to 20. This design could alleviate the assessment workload felt by students. They found that students would be able to complete the assessment and check their answers within the time given.
- Teachers found that the length of the passages was appropriate and the content of the story was interesting and suitable for the level of P.3 students. Students were eager to answer the questions.
- The reading passages included fairy tales and popular science. Teachers normally found popular science passages challenging to students. However, teachers found that the passage this year was based on a family conversation on a public holiday. The narrative was conveyed through the conversation. Students found the context familiar and the content easy to comprehend. Teachers were very pleased to find that student performances in answering the questions on popular science satisfactory.

- A teacher mentioned that students were given cues showing where they could get the answers in a specified paragraph when answering vocabulary items. This design catered for the needs of all students and enabled “weaker” students to try their best to answer these items. There were no “five-options-choose-two” questions and the number of items “requiring reverse thinking” had been reduced to one among the four sub-papers. Teachers were satisfied with these arrangements which tied in with the spirit of the curriculum.
- A teacher found an item (Item No. 19 in sub-paper 1) challenging because “weaker” students would not be able to understand the meaning of “Little Doctor” 「小博士」. However, another teacher mentioned that the organisation of the reading passage enabled students to understand the passage. This was done by first introducing lions and tortoise which students were familiar with and then introducing the theme “Water Bear” 「水熊蟲」.
- A teacher reflected that the 2017 Research Study was challenging to non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students. Although an instruction sheet with further information specifying the answering requirements 「增潤作答指引」 was provided, it was not so helpful. The teacher suggested reading the questions aloud for NCS students. An HKEAA representative replied that reading the questions aloud was not feasible due to fairness and consistency in measuring the reading competence. However, the support measures for NCS students would be further explored and enhanced.
- A teacher mentioned that schools would also assess students’ language knowledge as part of the examination content other than reading, writing, listening and speaking as assessed in TSA. An HKEAA representative replied that all the items were designed according to the Basic Competency documents.

b) P.3 Chinese Listening Assessment

- The level of difficulty of the listening assessment was of appropriate level for P.3 students. There were no “five-option-choose-two” items and items requiring “reverse thinking”. The assessment was aligned with the

requirements of Basic Competencies of P.3 students and students' daily life experiences.

- Teacher invigilators found that the content of the tapescripts was interesting and the voice-overs in Cantonese were vivid in their presentation. The students were smiling when answering the questions, feeling relaxed. A teacher suggested that the voice-overs in Putonghua be more vivid and lively.
- Teachers' views on whether or not the assessment materials should be played first varied. Most teachers proposed that students should be allowed to read the questions first and then listened to the content with the questions read aloud. A teacher suggested that questions should be read aloud first, followed by listening to the content. Another teacher suggested reading the questions aloud first, followed by listening to the content and then reading the questions aloud. This would cater for students with varied abilities. However, the assessment time would be very long.

c) P.3 Chinese Audio-visual Assessment

- Teachers were pleased to find that the content chosen was of appropriate level for P.3 students and there were no “five-option-choose-two” items and items requiring “reverse thinking” in the CAV assessment. However, one teacher commented that some vocabulary items used in the CAV assessment were not so common among P.3 students and these should be noted when designing items in future.
- A teacher mentioned that the topics were interesting and could widen students' horizon. The topics selected could reveal that concerted effort and thoughts had been thoroughly made by the HKEAA in the course of editing.
- A teacher suggested that the video clips be uploaded to the HKEAA's website for teachers' reference. An HKEAA representative replied that they would follow up with this suggestion.

d) P.3 Chinese Writing Assessment

- Most teachers were satisfied with the current arrangement: certain information required for practical writing had been provided, the number of boxes in which to answer the writing paper had been reduced, as well

as the “content” and “structure” in short text writing had been reduced from 5 levels to 4 levels. They agreed that the arrangement aligned with the spirit of the curriculum and suited the level of P.3 students.

- Teachers generally agreed that students were able to grasp the requirement of the writing tasks. They could write a greeting card and a short text.
- Teachers stated they had an understanding of students’ writing ability at territory-wide level when marking students’ scripts. This enabled them to reflect their limitations in teaching and so would facilitate their teaching in future. For example, students were able to express their friend’s feelings after he/she received a prize but were not able to accurately write a congratulation message. Another example was found in short text writing: students were able to briefly describe their experience in doing exercise but were not able to give details.
- A teacher mentioned that the marking criteria on “practical writing” items had been reduced from 4 levels to 3 levels. The reduction could not reflect students’ strengths and weaknesses and could not enable teachers to adapt teaching. Another teacher indicated that it was lenient since part of the format was provided in practical writing items. However, the other teacher reflected that this arrangement catered for the level and ability of all students and suited the requirements of Basic Competency.
- Most teachers welcomed the reduction in marking criteria for the “content” and “structure” in short text writing from 5 levels to 4 levels. However, one teacher mentioned that this was so lenient.

e) P.3 Chinese Speaking Assessment

- A majority of teachers found that the speaking topics were suitable for students at P.3 level. However, the task “3CSP06” would be challenging to NCS students because they might not know the meaning of giving red packets during Chinese New Year. This should be noted when designing items in future.

### **1.3 Views on P.3 Chinese Language Item Suitability**

- Most teachers stated that the items in Reading, Listening, CAV, Writing and Speaking Assessments are suitable for students at P.3 level. They felt that



compared to the items in previous TSA years, the 2017 items were simpler and more straightforward and that ‘tricky’ items were absent.

## **2. Primary 3 English Language**

### **2.1 Improved Assessment Design of P.3 English Language**

The assessment design for the English Language Assessment of the 2017 Research Study was based on the recommendations of the Working Group on Papers and Question Design under the Committee.

- The number of parts in the reading assessment had been reduced from four to three.
- The length of each reading task limited to 150 words and the length of the whole paper had been properly capped at 400 words.
- To help students manage the assessment time for the reading and writing paper, invigilators should announce the time twice during the assessment, i.e. 15 minutes and 5 minutes before the end of assessment.
- Items expecting answers in the past tense in the writing assessment had been scrapped (i.e. writing a recount).
- Assessment items on basic book concepts were to be avoided.

### **2.2 Views on P.3 English Language Assessment Design**

Teachers in general considered that the current arrangement of the assessment was fine. They felt that:

#### **a) P.3 English Listening Assessment**

- The current design and arrangement of the listening assessment was good.
- The listening tasks including the topics were familiar to P.3 students as they were related to students’ daily life experiences and authentic.
- The length of the listening papers (about 20 minutes) was appropriate for P.3 students.
- The speed of the presenters in the listening tasks was appropriate for P.3 students.
- One teacher suggested that the task involved listening to a story should be put across three sub-papers to ensure fairness of the assessment.
- The question 3EL1 Part 1B Q3, which required students to distinguish a small range of vowel sounds, might be challenging to some students.

b) P.3 English Reading Assessment

- The layout of the reading items was clear to students.
- The topics of the reading tasks were suitable for P.3 students as they were related to students' daily life experiences.
- The reading tasks were of appropriate level for P.3 students.
- The reading load of each task (maximum of 150 words) was found to be suitable for P.3 students and so was the reading load of each paper.
- The total number of reading items (about 20) in each paper was appropriate to P.3 students.
- The majority of students had enough time to complete the assessment.
- Some teachers found that the majority of P.3 students were able to complete the Reading & Writing Assessment without encountering any difficulties. However, one teacher opined that it was quite challenging for students to have to finish three reading tasks within 15 minutes.
- One teacher opined that the reading load of the reading papers should increase progressively. It was suggested that the reading tasks which required students to read timetables should be put in the first part of the reading papers. It was also suggested that the reading load of the two timetables in 3ERW1 and 2 should be more or less the same.

c) P.3 English Writing Assessment

- The writing topic of "At the Park" was familiar to students. The word prompts given to the students were found to be useful. The amount of word prompts given was also appropriate. However, the word prompt "drop" and "hit" might not be familiar to some of the students.
- Students were able to provide an ending to the story.
- The pictures in the "picture-aided storytelling" writing task were clear.
- Some teachers suggested providing names in the pictures to help students identify different characters in the story. However, some teachers commented that it would be confusing to students if names were added.
- Some teachers commented that the requirement of writing the story in about 30 words should be reviewed as many students were able to write more than 30 words now.

d) P.3 English Speaking Assessment

- The topics of the speaking papers were found suitable for P.3 students.

## **2.3 Views on P.3 English Language Item Difficulty**

### **a) P.3 English Listening Assessment**

Generally, teachers felt that:

- The listening tasks were of appropriate level for P.3 students.
- The listening items were straightforward to P.3 students. No “tricky items” were found. The level of difficulty of the items was appropriate to P.3 students.
- The artwork in the listening tasks was clear to students.
- The vocabulary used in the listening tapescripts and the listening items was familiar to P.3 students.
- The items with the question intent “Understanding the connection between ideas” was straightforward. Students were able to get the answers easily.

### **b) P.3 English Reading Assessment**

Generally, teachers felt that:

- The reading tasks were of appropriate level for P.3 students.
- The reading items were straightforward and easy. No “tricky items” were found.
- The layout of the reading texts was clear and easy to read. The pictures of the items were clear to the students.
- The question format of 3ERW1 Part 3 Q1, which required students to read four pictures and then identify the answers as “1 and 2”, might be challenging to some students.
- The items set on ‘following pronoun references’ were good. Students were able to get the correct answers.
- From teachers’ observation, students were able to handle items with the question intent “predicting the meaning of unfamiliar words”.

## **3. Primary 3 Mathematics**

The assessment design for the Mathematics Assessment of the 2017 Research Study was based on the recommendations of the Working Group on Papers and Question Design under the Committee.

### **3.1 Improved Assessment Design of P.3 Mathematics**

- The number of items had been reduced, with an immediate cut of around 20%.
- Only one Basic Competency was assessed in each item.
- Items requiring solving linking problems had been minimised.

### **3.2 Views on P.3 Mathematics Assessment Design**

- The current design and arrangement was acceptable.
- There were 33 questions in each sub-paper with 40 minutes of assessment time.
- The assessment focus of all items met the Basic Competency specifications.

### **3.3 Views on P.3 Mathematics Item Difficulty**

- The Mathematics items of 2017 Research Study were easy and straightforward for P.3 students.
- The level of difficulty of all items was appropriate for P.3 level.
- All items were appropriate at the Basic Competency level of Key Stage 1.
- The contexts of application problems were suitable for P.3 students. Those items were relevant to their daily life experiences.
- There were no ‘overly tricky questions’ in the Mathematics papers of P.3 TSA.
- It was observed that all students could finish the papers in 40 minutes except one student did not finish the last two pages.
- Most of the students could solve the problems.

## **4. Views on School Preparation for 2017 Research Study**

### **4.1 P.3 Chinese Language**

#### **a) Purchase of supplementary exercises**

- Some teachers mentioned that their schools will purchase supplementary exercise books which will be used throughout the year and for regular practice.

#### **b) Conduct of extra/remedial/drilling classes before the assessment**

- Some teachers had asked students to do mock practice in order to enable students to get familiarise with the assessment format, e.g. group interactions in Speaking Assessments (with the same layout and procedures as in the live assessment). A teacher mentioned that in order to enable students to have mental preparations, mock practice (not over-drilling) was done so as to ensure that students understood the format and requirements of the written assessments.

## **4.2 P.3 English Language**

### **a) Purchase of supplementary exercises**

- Some of the schools would continue to buy supplementary exercises in future. However, the majority of the teachers agreed that based on the 2017 assessment format, it was not necessary to buy extra supplementary exercises for the preparation of TSA.

### **b) Conduct of extra/remedial/drilling classes before the assessment**

- Some teachers expressed that there were extra lessons for the preparation of TSA in their schools. They had asked students to do past papers of TSA as mock practice in order to familiarise students with the assessment formats and procedures.

## **4.3 P.3 Mathematics**

### **a) Purchase of supplementary exercises**

- No supplementary exercises were necessary because all items in the 2017 Research Study were set at Basic Competency level.

### **b) Conduct of extra/remedial/drilling classes before the assessment**

- There was no need to conduct extra tuition classes.
- Past TSA paper were compiled by topics for students to do revision about one month before the assessment.
- 1 to 2 past papers were used for revision before the assessment in 2 schools.
- There was no special or additional preparation for almost all schools.

## **5. Views on Reporting**

There are four types of reports with different coverage available for the three subjects of the 2017 Research Study. These are based on the recommendations of the Working Group on Administration and Reporting under the Committee. Schools can select appropriate assessment reports, on a subject by subject basis.

<b>Type of Report Format</b>	<b>Content</b>
Report I – Existing version	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School Report and Item Analysis Report</li> </ul>
Report II – Simplified version	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School Report and Item Analysis Report (only own school data is provided, without the data of all participating schools)</li> </ul>
Report III – Integrated version	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Basic Competency Report by Item Groups</li> <li>School average vs participating schools' average on items under the same Basic Competency / question intent / learning unit and exemplars on student performances</li> </ul>
Report IV – Information Analysis Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each item is paired with its corresponding learning objective, Basic Competency and testing focus as well as analysis for each option in multiple choice items</li> </ul>

### **5.1 P.3 Chinese Language**

- Teachers welcomed Report III – Integrated version (Basic Competency Report by Item Groups) and Report IV – Information Analysis Report because they could help teachers analyse students' strengths and weaknesses.
- Teachers mentioned that the Information Analysis Report (Report IV) for multiple-choice questions with illustrations of the analysis of distractors and answers. In the past, teachers had to analyse and deduce the students' misconceptions by themselves according to the items and passages. The Information Analysis Report can lessen their workload and time for data analysis. The data and information given in the report could facilitate teachers' work on giving feedback to students and thus adjust learning and teaching.

### **5.2 P.3 English Language**

- Teachers commented that the reports provided to schools regarding the 2017 Research Study were useful. They pointed out that Report IV was particularly useful to them as it would provide ample information on students' performances. The provision of Report IV to school teachers helped lessen their workload in analysing data.
- By providing four types of reports to schools, teachers opined that there was enough data/information given to them for reviewing student performances.

### **5.3 P.3 Mathematics**

- The data/information given in reports was useful to teaching and learning, e.g. more examples of student work for reference.
- The new reports were helpful for identifying the strengths and weaknesses of students.
- A “download” button for Online Item Analysis (OIA) reports to get Report IV was preferred.
- Teachers suggested that the OIA reporting system be enhanced in future. For example, analysis can be tailor-made by schools according to the set criteria and particular groups of items (e.g. under the same Basic Competency / testing focus) be generated by schools.

## **6. Others**

- Most teachers expressed that the TSA data can help schools understand their students' level, strengths and weaknesses as early as possible. This facilitates teachers' early intervention of student performances where teachers can identify their students' weaknesses for remedial work. Teachers also mentioned that the TSA data is very important, particularly in writing. Early detection of students' common weaknesses can facilitate the remedial work for P.4 and P.5. Otherwise, if the data can only be obtained from P.6 TSA, this will be too late for teachers to do follow-up and give feedback.

- A teacher commented that the P.3 TSA should be scrapped because it would minimise the chance of students engaging in other learning activities.

Education Assessment Services Division

Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority

August 2017



**2017 Basic Competency Assessment Research Study**  
**Focus Group Meetings for Parents**  
**Hong Kong & Outlying Islands**

**No. of Meetings:** 8

**Overview**

**1. General principles**

Views from parent representatives:

- Parents generally supported TSA and considered that students' pressure mainly originated from their parents. They mentioned that parents' objection to their children taking TSA was due to the fact that they did not know about TSA.
- Schools had not prepared their students for TSA and so students did not feel any pressure regarding TSA. Some parents stated that the purpose of schools purchasing supplementary exercises was to enhance students' language ability and to help familiarise students with the assessment mode and item types of TSA.
- Parents had not purchased extra supplementary exercises for their children to prepare for TSA. Some parents did not know that their children had taken TSA and some were only told after TSA by their children.
- In general, their children felt relaxed taking TSA and did not feel any pressure induced by it. Some students felt disappointed at not being selected for the oral assessment.

Enquiries from parent representatives:

- Any follow-up actions from the EDB on over-drilling of assessment papers in schools
- How the EDB followed and handled cases of over-drilling discovered in schools
- Whether or not TSA data would make schools drill their students in order to meet the requirements of the curriculum guides and to enhance school ranking

Response from the EDB, HKEAA and Committee representatives:

- TSA is low-stake in nature and its purpose is to assess students' Basic Competencies (BCs). BCs are part of the curriculum and included in daily learning. Therefore, there should be no incentives for drilling. TSA is

primarily designed to inform learning and teaching and does not provide assessment results of individual students. TSA results do not affect students' advancement in studies and are not used to assess school performance. Hence, TSA results do not affect school ranking or result in "closure of schools". Since 2014, TSA has been removed from the Key Performance Measures (KPM) for primary schools so as to alleviate schools' concerns about the risks involved in the use of assessment data.

- The EDB has played an active role in communicating with various stakeholders, including school sponsoring bodies, schools and parents so that they understand the objectives and functions of TSA. Actually, the perception of parents in each school on the amount of homework varied: some considered it too much while others considered it too little. It was observed that the time students spent doing homework had no direct relationship with drilling.
- Most schools explained that the supplementary exercises were used to cope with the design of their school-based curricula so as to consolidate student learning and not specifically to prepare students for TSA. Teachers might download the TSA papers from the HKEAA's BCA website for reference as needed. Moreover, none of the supplementary exercises (including those with "TSA" printed on them) had been reviewed by the EDB. Furthermore, the questions in these exercises were not actual TSA items.
- Schools should be given flexibility to implement teaching and homework policy to assist students. It is not desirable to prohibit all schools from purchasing supplementary exercises or running remedial classes.

## **2. Administration/Implementation arrangements**

### Views from parent representatives:

- TSA should be conducted every year so that schools can understand students' actual abilities.
- Some parents suggested that schools' internal examinations or Pre-S.1 HKAT should be combined with TSA. Individual parents suggested the abolition of P.6 TSA, but proposed conducting the assessment without prior notice to schools. Some parents suggested alternate-year sampling arrangements and others suggested conducting TSA on an anonymous basis.

### Enquiries from parent representatives:

- The relationship between TSA and students' long-term development and benefits of TSA to students
- Whether or not TSA is used to monitor schools

- How the BC benchmarks were set and whether the EDB would lower the benchmarks if the students' performance was lower than the benchmarks initially set
- Whether or not TSA would be reviewed annually
- The reason for sampling in oral assessments since all students had to take part in other assessments
- The EDB's support of special educational needs (SEN) students taking TSA

Response from the EDB, HKEAA and Committee representatives:

- Implementation of TSA is to gauge P.3, P.6 and S.3 students' overall attainment of BCs in the three subjects of Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics with a view to helping the government review education policies and provide various support services to schools, and enabling schools to integrate assessment data and schools' development needs to devise plans for enhancing learning and teaching.
- TSA is not used to monitor schools but to enable schools to understand the overall performances and needs of their students. Schools can treat TSA like a 'medical check-up report'. If schools do not participate in TSA, they may not be able to know which areas precisely need improvement to promote learning and teaching. TSA should not induce much pressure on students. Correct use of TSA by schools is essential. Parents should also entrust the schools to make use of report data to enhance student learning.
- The BC benchmarks were discussed and set in 2004 by teachers, EDB's curriculum officers and HKEAA's subject managers. The standards set in 2004 remain unchanged across the years.
- The EDB has always been concerned about the implementation of TSA. The Committee was set up in October 2014, with the aim of recommending directions for the development of BCA as well as the enhancement of assessment literacy among schools. In order to address public concerns, the Committee conducted a comprehensive review of the P.3 TSA in October 2015. In January 2017, the EDB accepted the recommendations of the Committee extending the four new initiatives under the 2016 Tryout Study to all primary schools in the territory under the 2017 Research Study with a view to gathering more comprehensive feedback and continuously reviewing and enhancing related arrangements. The EDB has actually organised FGMs to continuously collect views from various stakeholders. Hence, stakeholders have a better understanding of TSA while their views are extensively collected to improve the review of TSA and so enhance student learning.

- If all students participated in the oral assessments, assessment time would increase, reducing lesson time and affecting classroom operation in schools.
- The nature and function of TSA and Pre-S.1 HKAT differ. Since 2014, the P.6 TSA and Pre-S.1 HKAT have been implemented on alternate years. Schools can take part in TSA in even-numbered years on a voluntary basis. TSA assesses students' BCs while Pre-S1 HKAT assesses students' performance based on the full curriculum.
- SEN students are encouraged to take part in TSA. Schools should make arrangements as used in schools for these students. Schools should apply for relevant support measures for their students and the HKEAA will arrange them accordingly.

### **3. Items/Reports**

#### Views from parent representatives:

- Some parents stated that their children worried about the difficulty of the items before they took TSA. However, after taking the assessments, their worries were removed. Their children found the items simple and were able to finish the assessments in a short time.
- Parents viewed the TSA items on the HKEAA's BCA website and found that the TSA items were easier than those in the schools' internal assessments.
- The Mathematics items were clear while some Chinese Language and English Language items were ambiguous. The items in school's internal examinations were different from those in TSA. Parents stated that the assessment reports in Mathematics were able to reflect clearly whether students' performance had been enhanced or not. However, the reports in Chinese Language and English Language could not clearly reflect the enhancement of students' performance.
- Parents were worried that the textbooks used by schools did not align with the TSA items.
- Some parents stated that "Information Analysis Report" was very useful because this report could reduce teachers' time in analysing items. Individual parents suggested that schools should receive a percentage range in "School Percentage", instead of an exact percentage figure. This would lessen incentives to drill students for the sake of getting a higher percentage. Individual parents suggested that schools should not be provided with the column "Territory-wide Percentage" in Report IV. This would result in introducing Report V to avoid imposing pressure on schools.
- Parents supported TSA. It was hoped that the TSA reports would be more transparent so that parents could access and understand the reports to facilitate

the learning of their children.

- Parents should have the rights to enquire their children's TSA results so that they could compare their children's performance against the territory-wide standards.

Views from school representatives:

- The assessment reports did not illustrate the results of SEN students. Schools were not able to know the learning progress of SEN students and their learning needs. It was suggested introducing a separate assessment report for SEN students.

Response from the EDB, HKEAA and Committee representatives:

- The nature of Mathematics is different from that of language subjects. The design of the Mathematics curriculum is content-oriented and so the content assessed is more concrete and clear. However, the design of the two language subjects is skill-oriented. Therefore, the concept of assessing languages is more complicated than assessing Mathematics.
- The previous TSA items contained "challenging" items although they constituted only a very low percentage of total items. After the implementation of enhancement measures under the 2016 Tryout Study and 2017 Research Study, the design of items was improved and individual "tricky" items had been removed.
- TSA school reports show the territory-wide percentages together with school percentages so that students' strengths and weaknesses can be identified. The majority of schools participating in the 2016 Tryout Study would like to obtain territory-wide level data for reference and know the quality of their school-based curriculum. According to the experience gained among some 50 participating schools, only 2 schools chose not to obtain territory-wide data. Since 2014, the BC attainment rates of Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics have been removed from the primary school reports. The EDB has also enhanced its internal guidelines such that TSA data would not be used to assess school performance. Moreover, the EDB has explained the implementation of TSA and the function of reports to various stakeholders on a regular basis so as to ease their worries and to enhance the function of TSA as an assessment tool.
- Schools are given TSA reports without individual student results but with only students' overall performance. The content of the school reports was enhanced in the 2017 Research Study. Schools/Teachers could choose one or more

reports among a selection of four assessment reports. Report IV “Information Analysis Report” was most popular with teachers. They considered that the analysis of each option in multiple choice items would facilitate feedback for learning and teaching and reduce their time in item analysis.

- The territory-wide level report has been uploaded to the HKEAA’s BCA website, describing the overall performance of students in Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics. It was suggested that if parents wanted to understand students’ performance in TSA, they could access this website to view the assessment reports.

#### **4. Professional support for schools / Others**

##### Views from parent representatives:

- Parents generally stated that they got information about TSA from the mass media. Their knowledge and understanding of TSA was limited and contained misunderstandings. Some parents had opposed TSA because they did not understand. However, they did not have concrete reasons to oppose the implementation of TSA.
- The EDB and schools should provide parents more information so as to alleviate their concerns. It was suggested that EDB should enhance promoting important messages about TSA to parents so as to enhance their understanding of its functions. On the whole, parents had trust in the schools. It was also suggested that the EDB encourage schools to explain TSA to parents so as to avoid misunderstandings.
- Moreover, parents suggested the following to help promote TSA messages:
  - Informing all parents about TSA-related messages by the EDB;
  - Inviting EDB representatives to introduce TSA in home-school activities;
  - Setting up a hyperlink on school websites to introduce TSA;
  - Introducing TSA to parents of students in kindergartens or P.1;
  - Uploading video clips explaining TSA for public viewing;
  - Showing TSA promotional clips on TV at family times; and
  - Organising open days for TSA.
- Only a few parents knew that the EDB had provided web-based learning and teaching resources. It was suggested that the EDB should enhance promotion of STAR and WLTS online platforms to the public.
- Some parents mentioned that they had not filled out a ‘Questionnaire Survey on Students’ Learning Attitude and Motivation’.
- Individual parents whose children had SEN said that their children sacrificed

the time to sleep and do physical exercise because they had to prepare for assessments. They felt that the support for SEN students was highly inadequate. It was hoped that the EDB would provide further support for SEN students.

Enquiries from parent representatives:

- The purpose of this FGM
- Whether or not the DSS schools needed to follow the curriculum guides to devise their school-based curricula

Views from school representatives:

- The interface of STAR did not facilitate teachers' use and it was hoped that the EDB would improve it.

Response from the EDB, HKEAA and Committee representatives:

- The EDB has organised some forums and seminars to communicate with stakeholders, such as principals, teachers, supervisors and school managers. It was hoped that schools had a better understanding of the 2017 Research Study. The EDB has Regional Education Offices (REOs) in 18 districts and parents are welcome to give their views anytime.
- The curriculum guides issued by the Curriculum Development Council set the focus in curriculum development so as to achieve the development targets and learning objectives of the overall school curriculum, thereby benefiting students. It was recommended that schools refer to the curriculum guides.
- The EDB would review the promotional strategies of TSA. In order to enable various stakeholders to know more about TSA, the EDB has used various channels to promote the important messages about TSA, such as mobile multi-media platforms (for example, broadcasting system on public transport), social media platforms and TV programmes. Moreover, these messages were disseminated by various stakeholders, including principals and parents. These stakeholders explained and shared their experience and parents were encouraged to view these materials. Moreover, the EDB has developed a resource kit on assessment for learning to introduce TSA. This contains promotional materials such as leaflets and CDs. Each school was given two resource kits and parents who were interested were encouraged to approach the school or view the EDB's website for details.
- The CUHK was commissioned by the EDB to conduct a 'Questionnaire Survey on Students' Learning Attitude and Motivation' to investigate students'

daily habits, including extra-curricular activities, learning interests and habits. Students' daily habits and their impact on learning were analysed from multiple perspectives to assist student learning. The questionnaire was conducted on a non-compulsory basis and parents could choose whether or not to fill out the questionnaire. If parents have filled out the questionnaire, an analysis report summarising students' overall performance would be sent to schools in November.

- The Hong Kong Education City (HKEdCity) has updated the STAR interface in June. Teachers were encouraged to use the platform to facilitate learning and teaching.
- STAR is an item bank designed to complement BCA, housing items on Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics. Each year, TSA items are uploaded onto the platform. There are some 40,000 items in the item bank. Teachers can use their HKEdCity accounts to log in to the platform and make use of materials on the item bank to compile assessment tasks for individual students or whole classes. The platform helps teachers understand students' levels and only the schools have the rights to store and retrieve their own students' results. Moreover, the system has computerised marking functions and students' performance reports are instantly available for teachers' reference. WLTS is an online platform with ready-made teaching activities and materials to address students' learning difficulties in relevant BCs for teachers' reference and use. Users do not need passcodes to log in. Students can also, based on their needs, make use of the "Student Zone" for self-learning. The EDB always encourages schools to make good use of the STAR and WLTS platforms and reiterates the message that schools do not need to purchase supplementary exercises for TSA.



**2017 Basic Competency Assessment Research Study**  
**Focus Group Meetings for Parents**  
**Kowloon**

**No. of Meetings:** 12

**Overview**

**1. General principles**

Views from parent representatives:

- Parents understood that TSA assesses BCs and they did not drill their children for TSA. They believed that TSA should be treated with ease.
- Parents stated that after the implementation of the enhancement measures, their children felt relaxed and did not feel any pressure when facing TSA.
- Some parents stated that schools had not prepared their children specifically for TSA. The content of the P.3 curriculum in school had already helped students prepare for TSA. Their children were occasionally asked to complete an exercise with formats similar to TSA and this was not considered as drilling.
- Some parents pointed out that their children were not pleased because they had to go to school to take TSA while the other class levels need not go to school on the days of assessment.
- Some parents were worried that schools would request teachers to drill their students for TSA because of pressure from the school sponsoring bodies.
- A number of parents pointed out that some schools believed that TSA would affect their ranking and so continuously increased the amount of homework.
- Some parents stated that they had bought TSA supplementary exercises, one for each subject, for their children to do usually on long vacation.
- Individual parents thought that TSA would affect secondary school placement allocation and so created pressure on their children. They also purchased some exercises for their children to prepare.
- In order to attract parents to purchase supplementary exercises, publishers used “TSA” as the title of these exercises and deliberately increased the level of difficulty in the content. Parents mistakenly thought that the supplementary exercises were real TSA items. As a result, many publishers followed suit. Some parents suggested that the EDB monitor these publishers and other parents suggested that legal action be taken to prevent such publishers from doing so.

- The EDB should enhance communication with schools and explain the original intent and objective of TSA to parents in order to prevent drilling.

Enquiries from parent representatives:

- The reasons for some schools to drill students for TSA

Response from the EDB, HKEAA and Committee representatives:

- TSA assesses BCs which are part of the curriculum. The EDB has played an active role in communicating with various stakeholders, including school sponsoring bodies, schools and parents so that they understand that TSA is low-stake in nature and there are no incentives for drilling.
- The EDB does not use the TSA results to rank schools and the school reports do not provide individual students' results.
- Since 2014, individual primary schools are no longer provided with the attainment rates of Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics so as to alleviate schools' concerns about the possible risks of the assessment data. Moreover, in recent years, the EDB has communicated with the school sponsoring bodies regarding TSA. The school sponsoring bodies had been informed that no attainment rates would be received by schools and there was no need to exert pressure on schools regarding the TSA results.
- Actually, the perception of parents in each school on the amount of homework varied: some considered it too much and others considered it too little. It was observed that the time students spent doing homework had no direct relationship with drilling. It was found that the exercises assigned by schools to students might not target entirely at TSA. Since "TSA" was printed on the supplementary exercises, parents had misconceptions that their children were being drilled for TSA. Teachers were entrusted to exercise professional judgement in choosing exercises and these exercises might not only be used for TSA preparations.
- Schools have the responsibility to let their students know the assessment mode of TSA. Therefore, schools provide a few mock practices on a need basis to familiarise students with the item types.
- None of the supplementary exercises in the market (including those with "TSA" printed on them) have been reviewed by the EDB. Furthermore, the items in these exercises are not actual TSA items. TSA items only assess students' BCs in Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics. However, the items found in the supplementary exercises in the market are far beyond BCs so they are more difficult.

- Starting from 2004 and onwards, TSA items have been uploaded to the HKEAA's BCA website each year. Parents could access the website for viewing. Parents need not purchase any supplementary exercises for their children to prepare for TSA.

## **2. Administration/Implementation arrangements**

### Views from parent representatives:

- Some parents mentioned that they did not understand the administration and implementation of TSA. After attending this FGM, they came to understand the administration and implementation of TSA.
- Some parents found that it was necessary to conduct TSA every year and so annual implementation of the assessment should not be given up. Individual parents suggested that alternative assessment modes could be used (for example, tablets, computer and interactive games). The paperless features including computer marking and reporting were environmentally friendly and enhanced students' interest in taking the assessment.
- It was suggested that schools could decide whether or not to participate in TSA. Before making a decision, schools could consult their parents so as to avoid any ill feelings from parents.
- Some parents suggested the abolition of TSA and allocation of resources to other areas, including using games to stimulate students' potential. TSA exerted pressure on schools and schools diverted the pressure to students and so a vicious cycle was formed.
- Some parents suggested that either P.6 TSA or Pre-S.1 HKAT was conducted while other parents suggested sampling arrangements and the abolition of Pre-S.1 HKAT. These parents considered that students were overloaded with tests and examinations, which constituted invisible pressure to students.
- Parents remarked that the assessment dates of TSA were too close to the school's internal examinations and their children felt pressure because they had to handle two examinations. Some parents also pointed out that TSA should be held on suitable dates so that children could learn in a relaxing environment free from pressure.
- Some parents suggested that schools' internal examinations should be combined with TSA and that the schools submit data to the government for analysis.

### Enquiries from parent representatives:

- The necessity of implementing TSA and the feasibility of adopting other modes (for example, introducing assessment modes from overseas) to assess students
- The functions of TSA for the EDB and schools
- The difference between TSA and Pre-S.1 HKAT

Response from the EDB, HKEAA and Committee representatives:

- In order to facilitate school administration arrangements, schools' year-end examinations are held in June. To avoid the scenario where the topics in the Basic Competencies have not been taught, TSA is also conducted in June. A majority of schools reflected that it was suitable to conduct TSA in mid-June.
- Under the 2016 Tryout Study, schools could choose whether or not to take part in TSA. This year, all public schools in the territory, except for private schools, were arranged to participate in TSA.
- Some parents suggested that schools' internal examinations should be combined with TSA and that the schools submitted the data to the government for analysis. This suggestion was not feasible in implementation. In response to alternate-year arrangements, the EDB representatives stated that such data would not be complete enough to track student progress of the same cohorts in achievement through the various key learning stages. Schools would not be able to receive their reports every year to review the effectiveness of their teaching arrangements. As to sampling, the EDB representatives responded that the government would not lose any information from the data on the territory-wide level. However, schools would lose some information to provide feedback to learning and teaching. The data would thus become limited.
- National assessments similar to TSA are largely conducted in paper-and-pen mode in other countries. These assessments are mainly divided into two levels: national level by sampling and school-level with participation of the full cohort. After the assessment, student individual results are disclosed to schools, parents and students. Various assessment modes from overseas can be used as reference but each of them has its own limitations. The EDB will continue to review and enhance TSA as well as to keep communicating with various stakeholders. The EDB will further enhance the training of in-service and pre-service teachers so as to enable them to understand the rationale of the assessment and the importance of various assessment modes to students.
- TSA has been implemented since 2004, mainly to gauge P.3, P.6 and S.3 students' BC levels in three subjects of Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics. TSA data provides territory level and school level reference

data for the government and schools. The EDB will make use of the assessment data in areas such as reviewing curricula, education policies, resource allocation. For schools, the assessment reports do not disclose individual student results and can assist schools in analysing students' overall performance, reviewing their curricula, improving teaching strategies, etc. Schools can apply EDB's school-based support services according to school-based needs. TSA has been held annually. Starting from 2014, P.6 TSA and Pre-S.1 HKAT have been implemented in alternate years. The function of Pre-S.1 HKAT is for secondary school placement allocation and some schools also use it for class allocation.

### **3. Items/Reports**

#### Views from parent representatives:

- Most parents indicated that their children found the TSA items easy and had not made special preparations for TSA. Their children felt relaxed when taking TSA because the TSA items were easier than those in schools' internal examinations and they had sufficient time to complete the assessment. Parents understood that it was important for students to grasp the BCs but worried that if TSA items were so easy that all students were able to answer correctly, it would weaken the true value of the assessment.
- Some ambitious schools drilled students for higher attainment rates in the hope of higher school ranking or better allocation of school places. It was suggested that the item types of TSA should be different each year so as to eliminate drilling. Some parents hoped that the territory-wide reports would only be given to the government for devising curriculum guides. They felt that these reports should not be given to schools so that schools would not drill students for higher attainment rates. However, other parents stated that conducting the assessment on an anonymous basis could not help schools effectively formulate teaching directions. Receiving only students' overall performance in the territory did not help much in this regard.
- Regarding TSA reports, parents found the contents clearly presented. They agreed that the TSA reports were essential to schools for reference. They also agreed that Report IV 'Information Analysis Report' was clearest since it provided the most data for school reference.
- Some parents suggested that schools should not be provided with territory-wide correct response rates because this would induce pressure on school heads.

#### Views from school representatives:

- Most students found that the TSA items were not difficult. However, some students found the Chinese oral assessment was more difficult than the other TSA components.
- In general, parents found that it was desirable to reduce the number of Chinese reading comprehension passages from 3 to 2. A few parents considered that the reading assessment time for both languages was very long and the writing items were too difficult. Other parents suggested an increase in the assessment time for Mathematics since they found the time given inadequate.

Enquiries from parent representatives:

- How schools and teachers make use of the data and the benefits to schools
- How the TSA reports inform learning and teaching and how schools and the EDB do follow-up actions
- Whether or not the level of difficulty of TSA items will increase if students' performance has improved

Response from the EDB, HKEAA and Committee representatives:

- The previous TSA used to include 'challenging items' but they were still within the scope of BCs. The existing TSA items align with the requirements for BCs of students and items are set based on students' daily life experience. Item setters are either in-service or retired teachers. Items are moderated by moderation committees which consist of EDB officers, experienced frontline teachers, professionals of tertiary institutions, etc.
- Enhancement measures were introduced under the 2016 Tryout Study. The measures included the provision of four reports for schools to choose. The 'Information Analysis Report' was most welcome by teachers because it alleviated teachers' time and workload in analysing students' performance.
- The school reports assisted schools in areas such as reviewing school-based assessment design, curriculum plans as well as adjusting teaching strategies. If only territory-wide level reports were provided, schools would have one less important reference with which to review their overall curriculum plans and learning and teaching practices, formulate relevant follow-up measures, etc.
- In the past, the EDB sent officers to 60% of schools receiving TSA school reports. The EDB's support officers explained the content of the reports and provided school-based support services to schools. The services included assisting teachers in formulating relevant follow-up measures in accordance to the learning difficulties exhibited by their students so as to improve and enhance the levels of learning and teaching.
- Since 2014, attainment rates of the three subjects of Chinese Language,

English Language and Mathematics have been removed from primary school reports. Schools can also select school reports not containing the territory-wide data. The EDB does not rank schools based on the performance of individual schools. TSA is also not used for secondary school placement allocation. The purpose of the assessment is to enable schools to have a deeper understanding of student learning. Schools can participate in the school-based support services where necessary.

- The purpose of TSA is to assist students who have not grasped BCs, thus enabling the government and schools to provide them with appropriate support. TSA data reflect the improving trends of students' overall performance.
- The TSA items will not be made difficult because students' performance has improved. The BC standards set in 2004 by the EDB and the HKEAA will not be changed because of item difficulty.

#### **4. Professional support for schools / Others**

##### Views from parent representatives:

- It was suggested that EDB should enhance promotion of TSA so that a correct message could be conveyed. This would avoid rumours from the public and dispel parents' misunderstandings about TSA. For example, the message that TSA would not affect allocation of school places could be disseminated on parents' day.
- Some parents said that attending the FGM has deepen their understanding of TSA. They also stated that they finally understood the meaning of the "no-stake, no drilling" design of TSA as mentioned in the news coverage. It was suggested that all parents should participate in the FGMs.
- It was suggested using promotional video clips on TV to enhance promotional effects. This was because parents had more opportunities to watch TV and so could get the related information via TV easily.
- Schools or the EDB should conduct seminars to parents with P.1 or P.2 children and their worries could be alleviated as soon as possible. It was also suggested that TSA issues be discussed with parents of P.6 students.
- Some parents were not pleased with the questionnaire survey on learning attitude and motivation. This was because not only students' performance in the three subjects was assessed, but also family status. However, other parents found that it was good to have an understanding of students' emotional status.
- Parents stated that after they had attended this FGM, they came to understand the operation and functions of the STAR and WLTS platforms. They believed that these two platforms could provide effective support to teachers and

students on learning and teaching. They suggested that the EDB should enhance the promotion of these two platforms.

- It was hoped that more resources for SEN students were available so as to gain parents' support for TSA.

Enquiries from parent representatives:

- Whether or not students can take the exercises on STAR again to correct the mistakes they have made

Response from the EDB, HKEAA and Committee representatives:

- In order to enable various stakeholders to understand TSA, the EDB has used various channels to promote important messages about TSA, including mobile multi-media platforms, social media platforms and TV programmes. Moreover, these messages were disseminated by various stakeholders, for example, school heads and parents, who explained and shared their experience. Moreover, the EDB has developed a resource kit on assessment for learning to introduce TSA, containing promotional leaflets and CDs. Parents were encouraged to approach the school or view the EDB's website for details.
- The EDB admitted that there was room for improvement in promoting TSA. Actually, consultations with various stakeholders have been in place to promote the correct message about TSA in related meetings. The EDB will enhance its promotional channels so as to enable parents to have an understanding of the operations of TSA. Parents' views collected in the FGMs would also be forwarded to the Committee.
- The CUHK was commissioned by the EDB to conduct a "Questionnaire Survey on Students' Learning Attitude and Motivation" to investigate students' daily habits, for example, extra-curricular activities, learning interests and habits. Students' daily habits and their impact on learning were analysed from multiple perspectives to assist student learning. The questionnaire was conducted on a non-compulsory basis and so parents could choose whether or not to fill out the questionnaire. If parents have filled out the questionnaire, an integrated report on students' overall performance will be sent to schools in November.
- In order to enhance the support on learning and teaching, the EDB has set up the STAR and WLTS platforms. STAR is an online item bank designed to complement BCA, housing items of Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics. Each year, TSA items are uploaded onto the platform. There are some 40,000 items in the item bank. Teachers can use their HKEdCity



accounts to log in to the platform and make use of resources in the item bank to assign assessment tasks to individual students or whole classes. The platform helps teachers understand students' levels and needs. Only the schools have the right to store and retrieve their own students' results. In addition, the system has computerised marking functions and students' reports are instantly available for teachers' reference. Quite a number of teachers commented that the items set according to the BCs were not sufficient to cater to the needs of students with varied abilities. Moreover, the assessment tasks required the assignment by teachers and this arrangement lacked flexibility. Therefore, the EDB is now studying how to make good use of IT to enhance the platform to promote student self-learning. For the WLTS platform, worksheets for P.1 to S.3, interactive assessment tasks and games are provided for teachers to use. Users do not need passcodes to log in. Students can make use of the 'Student Zone' for self-learning.

- There has been an update of the STAR interface. Teachers can make use of the system to set the number of attempts for their classes or individual students according to the aim of the assessment.

**2017 Basic Competency Assessment Research Study**  
**Focus Group Meetings for Parents**  
**New Territories East**

**No. of Meetings:** 12

**Overview**

**1. General principles**

Views from parent representatives:

- After attending the FGM, parents stated that they had come to understand the objectives and operations of TSA better. They also understood the rationale of TSA and so dispelled their misunderstandings about TSA. They knew the difference between the supplementary exercises in the market and genuine TSA items, as well as the importance of assessment. They would continue to support TSA and believed that all schools should participate.
- Parents agreed to schools' participation in TSA because the assessment could facilitate schools' analysis of student learning status and did not cause drilling. Some parents supported the fact that TSA could reflect whether or not students have learnt and grasped relevant knowledge so as to enable schools to know whether or not the knowledge and skills their teachers had taught was sufficient.
- Parents mentioned that schools did not make specific preparations for TSA. After seeing the enhanced version of TSA, some parents reflected that the current situation was very different from that in the previous years. The amount of supplementary exercises assigned by schools had been greatly reduced and the amount of homework had also been relatively reduced.
- The majority of parents mentioned that their children felt relaxed in completing the oral and written assessments and they did not feel any pressure. This was because the content assessed in TSA was on the whole the same as the knowledge they had learnt in class.
- Some parents mentioned that they did not know that their children had participated in TSA and their children had not revised or prepared for TSA.
- Generally, parents indicated that they had not made specific preparations for their children to participate in TSA. However, some parents had bought extra supplementary exercise for their children.
- Their children did not indicate that they did not support TSA and they had not mentioned TSA at home. Individual parents mentioned that their children

indicated their disappointment at not being selected to take the oral assessment.

- It was believed that parents' negative emotions about TSA were caused by schools. Parents said that schools had very high expectations on their students. Some parents explained that they opposed to TSA because they did not have much understanding about TSA. Moreover, the supplementary exercises in the market were found very difficult. Therefore, parents feared that the TSA items would also be very difficult and so children felt great pressure. Other parents mentioned that the source of children's pressure was from their parents since they drilled them unceasingly due to their misconceptions about TSA. Some parents believed that they should treat TSA with ease and it was fine as long as their children had tried their best on TSA.
- It was hoped that the government could enhance promoting the positive messages about TSA. Schools, teachers and parents could work together so that the culture of drilling would cease. Some parents also reflected that schools would select supplementary exercises apart from the course books. Parents felt that some items in these exercises were very difficult and far beyond their children's ability. Other parents agreed that students could understand and grasp the content to consolidate their knowledge through doing homework but amount of exercises assigned to students should not be excessive.

#### Enquiries from parent representatives:

- Whether or not TSA influenced allocation of secondary school places
- Whether or not the EDB can monitor drilling in schools

#### Response from the EDB and HKEAA representatives:

- BCs are part of the curriculum and students have grasped the relevant content in their daily learning. Therefore, schools do not need to make specific preparations for TSA. Students should not feel pressure in taking this assessment.
- TSA is a low-stake assessment and there are no individual results. The EDB does not use TSA results to assess school performance, to justify closure of schools or rank them. Moreover, TSA results do not affect allocation of secondary school places.
- Since its introduction in 2004, the implementation of TSA has been improved so as to facilitate schools' enhancement of teaching quality. The EDB has continued to organise FGMs, seminars, etc. for various stakeholders so as to

enable them to have a better understanding of TSA. Therefore, stakeholders' views have been extensively collected to perfect the TSA review. The EDB intends to gather all views and tackle TSA related issues in a comprehensive manner with a view to improving student learning.

- The findings from one survey indicated a massive disparity in homework time (for example, half an hour to 4 hours) within the same school. Therefore, schools need to be cautious when interpreting the meaning of these survey results. Schools select supplementary exercises professionally according to school-based curricula, teaching progress and students' learning needs, not specifically for TSA preparations. It was suggested parents should have more communication with schools to understand the actual situation. If parents found drilling in schools, they could reflect this to REOs.

## **2. Administration/Implementation arrangements**

### Views from parent representatives:

- Parents understood that TSA was not related to schools' internal examinations at P.6 which were for school placement. Thus, they did not oppose TSA. They added that as long as TSA did not affect students' internal examination results, they had no objection to annual implementation of TSA.
- Some parents mentioned that in order to alleviate students' pressure, schools should reduce one school's internal examination which was to be replaced by TSA.
- A number of parents said that TSA could be scrapped or changed because it only assessed students' BCs. A few parents stated that Pre-S.1 HKAT should also be abolished because students needed to handle too many internal examinations.
- A number of parents suggested that TSA should be implemented on a half yearly basis (once in the first term and another in the final term). Others said that it should be implemented annually. School could have more data to review curriculum progress and teaching content. Some parents added that TSA could be conducted in normal lesson time by distributing worksheets to students.
- Some parents suggested that assessing Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics in TSA was already sufficient. Other parents suggested Putonghua be added in Chinese oral assessment because Putonghua was also an important language and Putonghua was used as a medium of instruction in some schools. They also said that some students from the Mainland were not able to speak Cantonese.

#### Enquiries from parent representatives:

- Reason for conducting TSA on an anonymous basis
- Benefits of TSA to students
- Whether schools can extract data from dictation, examinations and tests in daily routine to assess students' abilities
- The long-term development and value of existence of TSA

#### Response from the EDB and HKEAA representatives:

- TSA is designed to gauge students' attainment of the BCs in the three subjects of Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics at the end of the three key learning stages. It enables the government and schools to review and improve learning and teaching in a timely manner. TSA is conducted in June each year so as to facilitate school administration arrangements. Students need not have specific preparations for TSA.
- The suggestion that TSA could be arranged in normal class time was a new idea but required a thorough study. Data from school's internal examinations could not replace TSA because each school has its own assessment content which differed widely in difficulty level. School's internal examination results could only indicate the performance in that school and this is not comprehensive. Without the territory-wide level data provided by TSA, there would be no indication of students' performance in the territory for reference.
- TSA provided schools with comprehensive data which enabled them to improve learning and teaching and formulate school-based curricula. Teachers could also detect students' learning difficulties in a timely manner and adjust teaching based on analysis reports. Early detection of learning difficulties and adjustment of teaching could consolidate students' foundation knowledge. Thus, they could catch up with the learning progress. The government could devise and improve education policies based on the information from TSA.
- Schools could make reference to the needs of students so that they could use either Cantonese or Putonghua in the Chinese oral assessment.

### **3. Items/Reports**

#### Views from parent representatives:

- A majority of parents said that their children found TSA items easy. Individual parents said that their children found some items difficult and other items easy.
- Some parents mentioned that they had viewed the TSA items on the HKEAA's BCA website so that they had a better understanding of the item types. However, other parents indicated that they had no idea whether or not the

relevant items had been posted onto the website.

- Various publishers produced supplementary exercises printed with ‘TSA’ in their title and items of these exercises were very difficult. Parent believed that they were actual TSA items and students with P.3 level would find these items very difficult. The item difficulty of TSA mentioned in the news coverage was not true. Parents felt great and unnecessary pressure as a result.
- Parents supported the arrangement whereby schools had overall student performance data from TSA since such data was necessary. Parents understood the importance of TSA reports to schools and believed that the TSA reports were suitable. They also understood that the reports facilitated continued educational development and benefited their children. However, other parents mentioned that TSA reports did not provide individual student results. Therefore, teachers could not identify individual student abilities and help students of weak abilities. Individual parents hoped that schools could release their TSA reports so that they had an understanding of their children’s learning levels.
- Some schools would make use of the data given for promotion so that parents had a higher opinion of them. It was hoped that schools and the EDB had sufficient communication so as to enable schools to make appropriate use of data analysis to follow up on learning.

#### Enquiries from parent representatives:

- After the release of TSA reports, whether or not the EDB explained the content of the reports to schools
- How schools receive support
- Whether or not schools would disclose their rank in the territory based on TSA results
- Channels of retrieving TSA reports and past TSA items
- Impact of difficulty level of assessments on student competitiveness

#### Response from the EDB and HKEAA representatives:

- Schools can participate in the EDB’s school-based support services and training courses on a voluntary basis. For example, support officers are sent to schools to explain the content of the reports and help teachers analyse data. They also design appropriate teaching activities for schools to improve teaching. Moreover, some schools cooperate with tertiary institutions to develop teaching materials and design teaching plans so that students benefit directly.

- TSA is low-stake in nature and the EDB has never ranked schools using TSA results. However, students' results on standardised tests are released in other places, for example, the USA. These assessments are high-stake since students' results affect teachers' salaries. The situation in Hong Kong is different from that in the USA. Not all parents would accept such arrangement.
- The EDB has always reviewed the transparency of TSA reports and how to enhance effectiveness in data analysis. For example, in the past, the attainment rates used to be provided in the school reports and schools felt pressure as a result. After the review, since 2014, primary schools are no longer provided with the attainment rates of Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics. Moreover, the EDB has removed TSA from the Key Performance Measures for primary schools so as to alleviate schools' concerns.
- Four enhancement measures were implemented under the 2016 Tryout Study. One of the major initiatives was to improve assessment papers and question design. Items were gauged at students' BCs and each item was moderated with multiple revisions. Now, the length and number of reading passages have been adjusted and some 'tricky' items avoided.
- Since 2004, all past TSA papers have been uploaded onto the BCA website for public view. Items have been accumulated over a decade. Parents could also view past TSA papers on this website any time. Thus they could find that the supplementary exercises in the market with "TSA" printed on them were not the actual TSA items. The items were on the whole more difficult than the actual TSA items. Parents could also access the HKEAA's BCA website to view the TSA territory-level reports.
- The BC benchmarks set in 2004 have stayed the same over the years. The attainment standards had not been lowered and they would not be changed even if the difficulty level of items were changed. The EDB is now dedicated to enhancing communication with various stakeholders including school sponsoring bodies. It has been planned that pre-service teachers will be trained regarding assessment concepts and how to make use of data to enhance learning and teaching in the future.

#### **4. Professional support for schools / Others**

##### Views from parent representatives:

- Parents' views on TSA were positive. The EDB should have more communication with schools. If parents understood the purpose and function

of TSA, they would be willing to let their children participate in TSA. The EDB should also enhance the transparency of TSA reports to parents.

- The government should enhance the promotion of TSA since parents, teachers and schools were involved in the implementation of TSA. In particular, the attitude of schools was important. Some parents believed that the EDB's targets should be schools, rather than parents, in enhancing the promotion of TSA. Parents got messages mainly from schools. If schools had a clear understanding of the rationale of TSA, they would support participation in TSA and then disseminate positive messages to parents. Otherwise, if the promotion was not sufficient, parents and students would have misunderstandings, resulting in negative emotions and tension in the community. As a consequence, both schools and students would be affected. On the whole, parents had trust in schools and followed the direction set by schools. Therefore, TSA would be extensively accepted by parents and students if it were clearly explained to schools.
- Some parents mentioned that they had viewed relevant TSA promotional clips on public transport and got information about the implementation of TSA from news programmes. Some parents also searched TSA information on the EDB's website. Other parents stated that they had never got any information about TSA from schools or viewed any promotional clips about TSA.
- It was recommended that the EDB organise more FGMs or seminars so as to facilitate parents' understanding of the functions of TSA. Some parents suggested 10 to 15 minutes' promotion in parents' meetings prior P.3 or in the first semester of P.3 so that parents understood the importance of TSA.
- Some parents indicated that they had filled out a questionnaire survey on non-academic data.
- Parents agreed with promoting web-based learning platforms, such as STAR and WLTS. They believed that these platforms could promote learning interests because their children liked exercises in the mode of online games and using tablets in learning. Some parents found STAR and WLTS helpful in student learning. However, whether or not the promotion was effective was based on students' autonomy. If students only did the exercises under parental supervision, students' learning attitude would be relatively more negative.

Response from the EDB and HKEAA representatives:

- The EDB admitted that promotion needed to be enhanced. The EDB has developed a resource kit on assessment for learning to introduce TSA. This contains promotional materials such as leaflets and CDs. Each school was



given two resource kits and parents who were interested were encouraged to approach the school or view the EDB's website for details. At the same time, the EDB uploaded promotional clips about TSA with experience sharing from schools, principals and parents. These promotional clips were also broadcast on mobile information platforms on public transport.

- In recent years, the EDB has continued to review TSA in order to collect views from various parties. Relevant TSA issues have been discussed among schools, principals and teachers. The EDB hoped that parents could have a further understanding of the assessment content. The rationale of inviting parents to this FGM was to explain the rationale of the TSA design directly and to collect views from parents.
- The questionnaire survey on non-academic data was to collect information about students' daily habits, for example, extra-curricular activities and learning interests. The impact of students' daily habits on learning was analysed from multiple perspectives to assist student learning.
- STAR is an online item bank. Teachers can use this platform to produce assessment tasks for individual students or whole classes based on student learning and needs. The assessment tasks are marked by the computer instantly and teachers are provided with student performance reports so that teachers can understand students' levels. Students can read their own student report to know their own learning performance. Teachers and students can access the platform using the HKEdCity's accounts.
- WLTS is part of the BCA project and is used to follow up student learning. The main aim is to help teachers provide teaching materials for students who have not grasped relevant BCs so they can render appropriate support. The platform is available for use without the use of passcodes. Students can also make use of the 'Student Zone' for self-learning. The EDB always encourages schools to make good use of the STAR and WLTS platforms and reiterates the message that supplementary exercises need not be purchased for TSA. Moreover, the EDB will enhance the promotion of the STAR and WLTS platforms.

**2017 Basic Competency Assessment Research Study**  
**Focus Group Meetings for Parents**  
**New Territories West**

**No. of Meetings: 9**

**Overview**

**1. General principles**

Views from parent representatives:

- Most parents mentioned that schools had informed them of the assessment dates and their children might be selected for oral assessment. Their children did not make any additional preparations for TSA. They did their revision and prepared for school's internal examinations according to their daily routine.
- Schools did not purchase extra supplementary exercises or drill students for TSA. Parents mentioned that they did not make their children prepare for TSA. Their children participated in TSA with ease and did not feel pressure from taking TSA.
- In general, parents' perception on TSA was positive. They believed that TSA implementation should be continued because children did not feel pressure when taking the assessment and they only felt like doing one more exercise. On the whole, children felt relaxed after taking TSA.
- For the 2017 P.3 TSA, parents still heard that students in some schools felt pressure due to the assessment and these schools drilled students for TSA in order to maintain their standards. Individual parents were worried that some schools over-drilled students falsely believing that secondary school placement allocation depended on TSA results. Some parents had heard early rumours that schools were closed due to unsatisfactory TSA results.
- To address the public's negative thoughts about TSA, parents stated that the main reason for them was over-drilling students by schools and bad atmosphere in the community with too much emphasis put on students' performance. Parents believed that the public did not understand TSA clearly. Because of fear, schools and parents drilled students/children. Schools and the EDB were advised to explain the purpose and implementation of TSA to various stakeholders clearly so as to enable them to understand the real purpose and functions of TSA.
- Individual parents reflected that their children had initially hoped that TSA would be abolished. It was because their children were required to complete

TSA supplementary exercises with parental assistance. As a result, parents' burden was enhanced. However, after their children had participated TSA, they did not mention abolishing it.

Response from the EDB, HKEAA and Committee representatives:

- The purpose of TSA is to assess students' BCs. TSA is low-stake in nature and so there should be no incentives to drill students for it. BCs are part of the curriculum and teachers do not need to teach them separately. The aim of TSA is to allow schools to understand students' insufficiencies via the assessment results so as to improve student learning. It is not expected that TSA would bring pressure to schools. Since 2014, TSA has been removed from the Key Performance Measures for primary schools so as to alleviate schools' concerns about the possible risks of TSA data.
- Different schools have different amount of homework. Their frequency of tests and examinations differs. The school variations may not be due to the influence of TSA. Regarding the strengthening of student learning in schools as mentioned by parents, such training might be based on students' own learning needs.
- The context of each school is different. Regardless of TSA, schools will strengthen training for students with high abilities. Moreover, with the support of parents, some schools will provide BC training to other students.
- The EDB should enhance communication with parents and clarify the negative rumours about TSA, for example, the previous rumours about the "closure of schools" due to unsatisfactory TSA results.
- The EDB has always been concerned about the drilling culture in schools. It has used various channels to enable stakeholders to understand the purpose and rationale of TSA and appropriate use of assessment data to improve learning and teaching. It has been reiterated that there are stages in students' cognitive development and learning processes. Practice is necessary but schools should not blindly drill students.
- Some 50 schools participated in the 2016 Tryout Study and all these schools indicated that drilling did not exist in their schools.

## **2. Administration/Implementation arrangements**

Views from parent representatives:

- Some parents in attendance mentioned that after attending this FGM, they came to understand TSA and its administrative and operational arrangement better.

- Most parents thought that TSA should continue because it helped schools improve their curricula and adjust teaching content according to students' levels.
- A number of parents indicated that TSA should not continue, believing that similar data was available from school's internal examinations.
- Some parents stated that whether or not students participated in TSA should be decided by teachers. This was because they believed teachers knew the performance of each student in each subject. The same group held that students should not be obliged to take the assessments of all subjects and recommended focusing on students with low abilities in order to make targeted follow-up arrangements.
- As to the TSA administration, most parents did not have comments on the following modes: sampling, alternate-year and yearly arrangements. However, individual parents considered that teachers' workload would be increased if TSA was conducted every year since teachers needed to do follow-ups on student learning after receiving the TSA reports. As to alternate-year arrangements, some parents thought that teachers would feel more relaxed since teaching materials need not be updated every year. Moreover, parents agreed to alternate-year arrangements because they believed students' results would be more or less the same. Other parents stated that sampling was not appropriate because data received by schools would not be comprehensive.
- Apart from the existing three subjects, i.e. Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics, it was suggested adding General Studies (GS). However, some parents believed that three subjects were already enough.
- Regarding assessment dates, most parents stated that the existing arrangement was fine and it is appropriate for TSA to be conducted after school's internal examinations.

#### Enquiries from parent representatives:

- The necessity of conducting TSA
- Whether or not students could choose to take TSA
- Whether or not P.3 students should take TSA next year
- The reasons why P.3, P.6 and S.3 students take TSA
- The reasons for full participation of P.3 students in TSA but alternate-year arrangements for the P.6 TSA
- Whether or not some schools only chose students with very good academic performance to take the Chinese oral and CAV assessments in TSA

Response from the EDB, HKEAA and Committee representatives:

- The TSA data serves as an important reference for schools to enhance learning and teaching and assists schools in reviewing areas such as school-based curricula, teaching strategies and activities. Schools can use their school reports to identify strengths and weaknesses in BCs for follow-ups and improvement so as to enable students to study effectively in the next key learning stage.
- TSA is not a special activity and it should be treated as a normal school day or activity day. If students are absent due to certain reasons, their absence should be treated according to schools' daily practice.
- TSA is still undergoing review and views from various stakeholders have been collected. No decision has yet been made regarding the 2018 TSA. The EDB will consider future arrangements after the Committee has made recommendations.
- The P.3, P.6 and S.3 TSA are implemented respectively at the end of Key Stage 1, Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3. The purpose of the TSA implementation at these three levels is to enable schools to gauge students' attainment of BCs. If students have not attained the BC levels at a particular key learning stage, schools could do follow-ups in a timely manner so as to help them learn better in the following key learning stage.
- The reason for annual implementation of TSA was to enable schools to have a firm grasp of students' overall performance each year. However, if TSA was implemented on an alternate-year basis, it was not feasible for schools to track student learning progress over time for any follow-ups. Thus cohort studies tracking student learning progress conducted by the government would be limited. Variations in student ability have been observed from year to year. Each year, schools are provided with data to follow up on student learning in a timely manner. TSA is low-stake in nature for both students and teachers and schools do not need to make any preparations for TSA.
- The nature and function of TSA and Pre-S.1 HKAT differ fundamentally. In order to address the public concerns about over testing of P.6 students, since 2014, the P.6 TSA is conducted in odd-numbered years and Pre-S.1 HKAT is in even-numbered years. Schools can take part in TSA in even-numbered years on a voluntary basis.
- The scenario where students are secretly replaced by proxies in taking TSA does not exist. The oral and CAV assessments are conducted on a sampling basis and students are not selected by their schools. The list of students selected for the assessment is not revealed to schools until the day of

assessment. Selected students who are absent will be replaced by the pre-arranged reserve students to take the assessment. The HKEAA staff will check the identity of each student before the assessment. Therefore, the issue of students selected by schools to take the assessment has never happened.

### **3. Items/Reports**

#### Views from parent representatives:

- Early on, parents opposed TSA because they had heard of ‘tricky’ items in TSA supplementary exercises. They believed that even adults were not able to answer such items and that this imposed pressure on P.3 students. Parents did not know if such information was accurate, and the EDB did not further explain or clarify the fact that the tricky items were not the actual TSA items at the time. Therefore, parents and schools felt frightened and stressed since they did not know the real situation.
- Their children did not find TSA items difficult. In fact, they found TSA items easier than those in school’s internal examinations. Some parents said that their children found the difficulty level of TSA items ranged from easy to average. Individual parents claimed their children had slight problem in language expression and therefore found TSA items quite difficult and felt stressed.
- Some parents said they did not oppose TSA because TSA data benefited the government and schools. They agreed to the existing arrangements and functions of TSA since TSA gave schools data with which to follow student learning progress.
- Parents supported the arrangements whereby there were no individual student names in the reports. If student names were found in the reports, teachers would compare individual students’ performance. Students would feel more pressure. Parents were also worried that some schools misunderstood the rationale and the real purpose of TSA and unceasingly drilled students. However, other parents mentioned that TSA provided the overall performance of students in a school which benefited the government and schools but if schools did not have individual student results, TSA was not useful since it did not help parents assess or do follow-ups on their own children’s learning.

#### Enquiries from parent representatives:

- How can the schools and students improve since TSA reports do not have individual student results: students do not know their own standards and schools do not know individual students’ standards

- Reasons for taking TSA if schools have received the school reports for so many years but students' results in Chinese Language have not been improved
- The difference between 'percentage of correct responses' and 'attainment rate'
- Whether or not the EDB and HKEAA would use the TSA results as an indicator to assess school performance
- How to view past TSA items

Response from the EDB, HKEAA and Committee representatives:

- There are two levels of TSA reports: territory-wide level and school level. On the territory-wide level, the TSA reports, together with exemplars illustrating students' overall performance of Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics, are found on the HKEAA's BCA website. The government can make use of TSA data on areas such as formulating education policies, providing resources and devising directions for support and training. On the school level, schools receive school reports which include percentages of correct responses and information of students' performance in each BC related item. Teachers can make use of this information to identify students' overall strengths and weaknesses so as to devise plans to improve learning and teaching effectiveness. Schools can make use of other assessment tools such as school's internal assessments and the STAR platform to understand individual students' learning performance for follow-ups.
- From 2014 and onwards, in order to help alleviate the pressure felt by schools due to TSA results, schools were not given the attainment rates of the three subjects of Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics. The purpose of the school reports was not to disclose individual students' performance. It is hoped that schools are provided with a blueprint to improve teaching. Moreover, the EDB has clearly stated that TSA results would not be used to assess school performance.
- Each year, the performance of students participating in each school is different. There are various factors (for example, student combination and family background) affecting students' performance. Although overall students' performance has been found steady across the years on the territory-wide level, students' performance does vary on the school level. Therefore, the school reports are very important and have a high reference value.
- The concept of 'percentage of correct responses' is different from that of 'attainment rate'. The BC benchmarks set in 2004 remain unchanged. The benchmarks have not been changed although the items in recent years were easier than those of the previous years. To put it simply, if the TSA items were

“easier” than previous year, students had to get more answers correct in order for them to attain a given BC standard.

- In the past, before the information analysis reports were introduced, many schools arranged for teachers of Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics to analyse items upon receiving school reports. The information analysis reports provided by the HKEAA have eliminated the workload of teachers in analysing items. Therefore, how schools make use of the assessment reports and data to improve learning and teaching was an important task.
- The mass media reported that the improved items were “easier” now because there had been some ‘challenging’ items in the past TSA papers. Now, the items are all gauged at the BCs of P.3 students. After a series of professional discussions, the EDB and HKEAA had made appropriate adjustment, for example, the number of Chinese reading passages was reduced from 3 to 2. Since the number of reading passages was smaller, students would find it easier to handle. Moreover, the assessment could reflect students’ ability so the adjustments were not blindly made.
- Every year, after the release of TSA results, the HKEAA organises a total of 9 seminars for Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics at P.3, P.6 and S.3 levels. Schools are given illustrations of students’ overall performances as well as their strengths and weaknesses.
- From 2004 to 2017, all past TSA items have been uploaded onto the HKEAA’s BCA website and parents can access this website to view them.

#### **4. Professional support for schools / Others**

##### Views from parent representatives:

- Parents stated that after attending the FGM, they came to understand TSA better. However, they believed that many parents still did not understand the actual purpose of TSA. It was suggested that the EDB should seek ways to enable more parents to understand the actual function of TSA. However, parents found that the arrangement of the FGMs was not comprehensive because parents were selected to attend the meetings on a random sampling basis.
- Some parents mentioned that they had not viewed relevant TSA promotional clips on public transport mobile information platforms, social networks, leaflets or TV programmes. Parents found the promotion about TSA insufficient and so the community and schools did not understand TSA and harboured the misconception that TSA caused drilling.



- To address the promotion of TSA effectively, parents suggested the following:
  - (1) The EDB should enhance the promotion via TV;
  - (2) The EDB should have more communication with schools: disseminating new messages about TSA by means of PDF, FLASH or short videos on the schools' website so as to enable parents to view the TSA promotional pop-up and view these promotional messages;
  - (3) The EDB should set up stalls on the streets with many passers-by for TSA promotion. Giving those members of the public a souvenir would enhance the promotional effects;
  - (4) When designing leaflets, the EDB should avoid including too many words and the essential features of leaflets should be simple with more illustrations;
  - (5) The EDB should actively communicate with schools and parents, for example, by organising seminars for parents on school's open days. The themes of the seminars could be related to children's promotion to secondary school or ways to enhance reading skills;
  - (6) The EDB could use parents' social groups to disseminate messages about TSA.
- Parents believed that STAR and WLTS platforms were good and could facilitate student learning. Some parents pointed out that they did not need to go to a book fair to buy exercises for their children. The online games provided on the WLTS platform could give students incentives for self-learning. However, parents found that in general children did not have time to use these learning platforms because they were overloaded with homework and revision every weekday. On weekends, children spent time on leisure or extra-curricular activities.
- A few parents considered that the "Students' Zone" of WLTS might increase their children's homework load. Schools and parents might use the platform to drill students and children because parents generally believed that TSA ultimately promoted drilling.
- It was hoped that the items on the STAR platform were not confined to those address students' BCs.
- It was suggested that parents should be given an account and passcode to log in to the STAR platform.

Enquiries from parent representatives:

- Whether or not the EDB has a school ranking list
- Whether or not the EDB would produce standardised teaching materials and

assignments for all schools to enable parents and teachers to compare their students' performance with other schools

- Provision of support to schools with bad TSA performance
- How to handle parents' negative comments in the FGMs
- The method of choosing schools for the FGMs
- Channels for relevant information about the WLTS and STAR platforms
- Whether or not mobile phones can access the WLTS platform
- Whether or not passcodes are required to log in to the STAR platform

Response from the EDB, HKEAA and Committee representatives:

- The school ranking list circulated in the public is not from the EDB as there is no such list.
- The EDB does not have standardised teaching materials or assignments for school use because student admission and context of each school differ. Therefore, schools are encouraged to formulate school-based curricula according to the EDB's curriculum guides. In doing so, they should take factors such as school context, school's developments focuses and students' learning needs into consideration. Moreover, schools can design their own assignments based on their students' abilities and learning progress. Information and data provided by TSA enable schools, teachers and parents to understand students' overall performance in BCs. School reports enable schools to understand their students' performance relative to the counterparts in the territory.
- Schools can apply for the EDB's school-based support services according to school context and needs in their incentives. However, schools are not obliged to do so. Each year, the EDB provides various types of support for schools to participate in on a voluntary basis. This support includes language support, support services for primary and secondary schools as well as collaboration with tertiary institutions in research studies.
- The selection of schools for the FGMs was on a random sampling basis. Tens of meetings were organised. Parents' views were anonymously recorded and collected by HKEAA staff. In general, it was hoped that parents and schools worked together to assist students and they did not have strong negative attitudes towards TSA. Some individual parents suggested the abolition of TSA and allocation of resources to other activities so that students could learn more happily and delightfully. However, they did not have solid grounds to such oppositional views. After explanation, the relevant parents understood that TSA was part of the process of learning and teaching and their attitudes

started to soften.

- The EDB has developed a resource kit for schools to use flexibly. The EDB has also produced video clips on public transport mobile information platforms and social networks to promote relevant messages about TSA. The EDB admitted that promotion of TSA needed to be enhanced. It has been planned that in future various channels would be used to enhance promotion, such as enhancing the communication between various stakeholders, such as parents and teachers. Parents' suggestions on promoting TSA will also be considered.
- STAR is an online item bank housing more than 40,000 items. HKEdCity users can log in to it. Teachers make use of this platform to assess students' learning performance. Other than desktop computers, tablets, mobile phones can also be used to access STAR. WLTS is a learning and teaching resource platform with ready-made teaching materials for teachers to use. No passcodes are required to log in to this platform. At the current stage, the WLTS mainly supports desktop computer browsers and only some games can be accessed on mobile devices. The EDB promised that they would enhance the promotion of relevant information about STAR and WLTS to parents.

Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority  
December 2017

**2017 Basic Competency Assessment Research Study**  
**Focus Group Meetings**  
**Meeting with Federations of Parent-Teacher Associations of 18 Districts**

Date: 25 October 2017 (Wednesday)  
Time: 9:00 am-10:30 am  
Venue: Room 603, 6/F, East Wing, Central Government Offices,  
2 Tim Mei Avenue, Tamar, Hong Kong

**Summary**

**1. General Principles**

Views of Federations of Parent-Teacher Associations (FPTA) representatives:

- Parents generally considered that Basic Competency Assessment (BCA) did not have negative impact on students. Some school heads pointed out that the strategies adopted in the market to promote supplementary exercises had caused misunderstanding about BCA among parents and suggested that the Education Bureau (EDB) consider imposing control.
- Individual parents overreacted in the media, paying no regard for their impact on the public, while creating unnecessary psychological burden and anxiety for children.
- As there was ungrounded resistance in the community, it was suggested that the EDB should deliver positive messages to the public.
- At present, publicity at the school level was inadequate, so the EDB should conduct seminars in every school.
- Some school heads indicated that they had seen resources such as video clips and leaflets introducing BCA and had explained BCA to parents. However, some school heads said they had never seen such videos and they had no idea where relevant resources were available.
- Some representatives pointed out that primary school heads in their district generally agreed to the principles underlining BCA. In addition, they opposed drilling. They also reported that over-drilling was common in some of the schools in the district. Some primary school heads maintained that there was no need to drill students for better results and schools should let students take the assessment as usual.
- Even without BCA, certain schools and parents would still drill their students/children for various reasons. It was believed that excessive homework

was a universal problem for schools in Hong Kong and solutions should be explored.

- The drilling culture was already deeply rooted. Some parents pointed out that the society was undergoing industrial restructuring. Assessment design should allow more possibilities so that students could have more opportunities for development. It was recommended that the EDB consider promoting pleasurable learning while carefully considering the changes that students had to face in terms of employment options.

Response from EDB representatives:

- Through discussions at more than 40 focus group meetings for parents, it had been found that most participating parents understood the arrangements and purpose of TSA. Publicity would be strengthened to strive for wider acceptance.
- Every school had its need and way of raising students' standard. However, it was difficult to define "drilling" as there were different school contexts. It was proposed to focus on the correct use of assessment tools and data.
- BCA was only a form of assessment. Its contents were already covered in daily teaching and no specific drilling was needed. The EDB also opposed pathological drilling. Regarding the above proposals, opinions of stakeholders would be balanced and consolidated when considering adjustments.
- The EDB valued the professional role of schools and gave them trust and recognition. As an important reference tool, BCA could facilitate schools in using their own and external data as well as school contexts for analytical purpose, and hence creating a teaching environment that could meet the needs of students. The overall data could help schools explore blind spots not covered by internal reviews.
- As indicated by the data this year, only less than 1% of schools opted for the simplified version that did not comprise the territory-wide data (including schools opting for all four versions). This showed that schools, on top of their own assessment data, also attached great importance to the referential value of external assessment data when conducting analysis.
- The EDB urged members of the education sector to uphold their professional role when discussing professional issues. Apart from creating an atmosphere conducive to students' pleasurable learning, there was also a need to take students' prospect into consideration, sustain the development of quality teaching, and hence ensure the future competitiveness of Hong Kong's younger generations.

## **2. Administrative/Operational Arrangements**

### Views of FPTA representatives:

- Most of the attendees indicated that atmosphere in their districts was peaceful and rational this year, without last year's over-reactive scenes, but relatively speaking, BCA was still a sensitive topic in certain districts, where tension was created by some people in open forums.
- Parents expressed that they were not aware of any drilling in schools, and schools also indicated that there had not been any drilling.
- Only very few parents made their children withdraw from the assessment, and the withdrawal was merely considered a way for some people in the community to exert pressure on the school sponsoring bodies and had not become a prevailing atmosphere.
- Some attendees suggested that the EDB deal with the administrative arrangements of the assessment in a low-key manner, so as to avoid triggering a turmoil spurred by public opinions.

### Response from EDB representatives:

- The crux of the problem presently lay with the large number of people who did not grasp TSA, so this was where efforts should be made to solve the problem.

## **3. Assessment Items/Reports**

### Views of FPTA representatives:

- With regard to the improved assessment papers and question design, representatives of FPTA all agreed that the assessment items this year were appropriate for students, aligning with the requirements of Basic Competencies. Students did not need extra drilling for BCA. They could easily complete the assessment, without having any anxiety weighing on them.
- They appreciated the diversified question types in reading and writing of the Chinese and English subjects and thought there was improvement as compared with those in the past. The EDB was expected to publicly share the question types and adopt the method of standard referencing to select students' different performances as indicators of high, medium and low levels.
- Parents rarely drilled their children and found the assessment items easy.
- Some students indicated happily after the assessment that the assessment items were easy and not as difficult and scary as people said.

- As for the enhanced school reports, the attendees were aware that schools could obtain more comprehensive information to provide feedback on learning and teaching through the existing version, the simplified version, the integrated version and the information analysis report provided by the EDB. Efforts of the EDB in promoting the professional development of schools were affirmed by attendees.
- The EDB was requested to release the school reports earlier, hopefully by late August, to facilitate schools in working out the teaching schedule of the following year.
- Parents wished to have more rights to information in respect of BCA results.

Response from EDB representatives:

- With the improvement of assessment papers and question design, this year's assessment items had an appropriate level of difficulty. The views that the design of this year's assessment items aligned better with students' standards and the requirements of Basic Competencies and that students were not required to drill specifically for BCA were consistent with those collected from the Focus Group Meetings for Teachers, Focus Group Meetings for School Heads and Focus Meetings for Parents.
- The EDB would review the above recommendations in a proactive manner.
- The standard referencing method had been adopted for BCA.

#### **4. Professional Support for Schools/Others**

Views of FPTA representatives:

- It was noted that the EDB was providing schools with various kinds of support, through intensive workshops on “enhancing the use of assessment strategies and promotion of learning and teaching”, on-site school support services, developing teaching and assessment materials in collaboration with tertiary institutions, as well as cooperating with schools on parent education. The EDB's effort to help schools enhance learning and teaching with students' learning at the core was supported and appreciated.
- Regarding the questionnaire survey on students' academic attitude and motivation, representatives were aware of related arrangements and supported the EDB's study and analysis of factors affecting students' learning with an approach premised on students' learning.
- BCA was considered an important tool to promote assessment for learning, providing crucial data for teachers and school heads to enhance learning and

teaching. The attendees expressed that they were aware of the ongoing review of the implementation of BCA and there was a need to balance the views and perceptions of various stakeholders and then make professional judgement. This was considered an arduous long-term task. Regardless of the future decision on how to proceed with BCA, as long as the recommendations were beneficial to children's learning, FPTAs would actively discuss with respective executive committees on whether and how to support the measures.

Response from EDB representatives:

- Regarding the above recommendations, the EDB would actively review the related measures and continue to strengthen the provision of professional support for schools.



**2017 Basic Competency Assessment Research Study**  
**Focus Group Meetings for Teachers**  
**Summary Report on Reporting**

### **Target Groups**

The Education Assessment Services Division (EASD) of the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) organised a total of 18 focus group meetings (FGMs) for teachers of Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics between 26 and 31 January 2018 (6 FGMs as per subject). Teacher representatives from schools in four districts (Hong Kong & Islands, Kowloon, New Territories East and New Territories West) attended the FGMs. An invitation letter was sent to 500 primary schools participating in the 2017 Research Study to assign their school representatives to attend the subject FGMs.

### **Mode and Focus of Meeting**

The FGMs consisted of about 1.5 hours of semi-structured questions and responses. The focus of the meetings was as follows:

1. Use of the 4 types of school reports
2. Views on the reports
3. Suggestions on the reports
4. Views on the 2017 Research Study

### **Overview**

Views from the school representatives were given as follows:

#### **1. Use of the 4 types of school reports**

- A total of 755 school representatives attended the 18 FGMs. 559 of them (74%) indicated that they knew that after the completion of the 2017 Research Study, the HKEAA would provide schools with the four types of school reports (including “School Reports (existing version)”, “School Reports (simplified version)”, “Basic Competence Reports by Item Groups” (Report 3), and “Information Analysis Reports” (Report 4).
- 558 school representatives (74%) were able to access these reports and 539 of them (71%) had used these reports to analyse students’ strengths and

weaknesses. 563 of them (75%) agreed that Reports 3 and 4 could provide appropriate feedback to improve learning and teaching.

## **2. Views on the Reports**

- On the whole, the enhanced school reports were welcomed and supported by teachers. Teachers stated that the reports provided appropriate feedback to assist learning and teaching. They said the reports also reduced their workload in analysing students' strengths and weaknesses. They also claimed that the reports helped newly recruited teachers grasp students' Basic Competencies (BCs), understand item setting and review the effectiveness of teaching.
- Teachers held that the exemplars and quantitative feedback in Report 3 gave teachers an understanding of students' performance from multiple perspectives. Teachers claimed that the analysis in the report was comprehensive and thus teachers' workload was reduced and learning and teaching enhanced. The presentation diagrams using triangles to indicate territory-wide and school percentages were held to be clear. Teachers reported that each data set was also found in this report was clearly presented and so they could analyse students' strengths and weaknesses effectively.
- Report 4 specifically illustrated analysis of each multiple choice option. Teachers claimed that the analysis provided useful feedback for learning and teaching. They believed it helped teachers analyse students' learning difficulties and understand the knowledge/skills students required to give correct answers. The "one-item-one-page" presentation was clear and easy for teachers to understand.

### **2.1 Primary 3 Chinese Language**

- Most teachers mentioned that the overall reports provided quantitative and qualitative feedback which facilitated teachers' analysis of students' strengths and weaknesses. This enabled teachers to understand students' learning difficulties as well as formulation of enhanced teaching plans. Teachers indicated that the previous reports only provided quantitative data. Data presented in the new reports using images effectively demonstrated students' performance.
- Teachers particularly welcomed Reports 3 and 4. They found that the analysis of the Reading assessment in these 2 reports was very useful. After identifying

students' strengths and weaknesses, teachers said they were able to make use of the Web-based Learning and Teaching Support (WLTS) and Student Assessment Repository (STAR) platforms via the hyperlinks to enhance learning and teaching.

- Teachers claimed that the presentation using triangles to indicate territory-wide and school percentages in Report 3 helped teachers easily identify the discrepancy between the two given percentages. Most teachers found that the content of the reports was able to reduce their workload. Before the introduction of these reports, teachers had to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of students' performance by themselves. Some teachers stated that the information provided in Report 4 was able to improve learning and teaching. They mentioned that analysis of each multiple choice option was clearly and concretely presented and served to inform learning and teaching.
- Teachers found that the four reports provided sufficient exemplars and data. The related analysis helped reduce their workload, in particular in Report 4 where illustrations were given for each multiple choice option. It was felt that this helped teachers analyse students' learning difficulties. Some teachers considered that presentation of "one-item-one-page" in Report 4 was clear enough to facilitate teachers' analysis and follow-up on specific selected items.
- Individual teachers held that no territory-wide level data was provided in the School Reports (simplified version) and this reduced pressure on them. However, if schools selected the existing version, teachers would still have the pressure. Other teachers pointed out that although the reports were useful, not all teachers had an access right to view the reports. Moreover, these reports were confidential and restricted in circulation.

## **2.2 Primary 3 English Language**

- The information given in Reports 3 and 4 was welcomed by teachers. They found the information useful to enhance their teaching plans and improve learning and teaching.
- Teachers held that the information in Report 4, in particular, helped them understand the performance of students in each BC. The analysis provided enhanced student learning and helped reduce teachers' workload. Moreover, the analysis of each multiple choice distractor and correct answer in Report 4 was

found comprehensive enough to enable teachers to understand what BCs students had acquired.

- The information analysis provided in Report 4 was found to be comprehensive and useful to teachers. However, individual teachers opined that the analysis could be more in depth.
- It was felt that the exemplars and quantitative feedback given in the reports provided detailed information about how students performed in different aspects (e.g. listening, reading and writing). Teachers considered that it could help them understand students' strengths and weaknesses.
- The qualitative feedback in Report 4 was perceived as very useful to teachers. They said it provided them with information about possible problems in student learning. The consensus was that the information would best benefit teachers with less teaching experience.
- The bar charts showing the performances of students in the past three years in the Online Item Analysis (OIA) Reports were seen very useful by teachers. They said that the reports provided objective data to facilitate the formulation of teaching plans.

### **2.3 Primary 3 Mathematics**

- Teachers found that the School Reports, Item Analysis Reports (sorted by sub-papers/BCs) had already provided sufficient data to inform schools and to enhance teaching effectiveness.
- Teachers indicated that the data given in Reports 3 and 4 was useful for schools' analysis. These teachers stated that they used to perform similar analysis in school. Due to constraints on manpower and time, they could only conduct analysis on a few dimensions. Now, the HKEAA had provided reports on the analysis of BCs. They found the content was far more detailed and comprehensive. They believed reports could provide valid data to inform learning and teaching, facilitate the planning of teaching foci and eliminate teachers' workload. Teachers mentioned that Reports 3 and 4 would be particularly useful to teachers with less teaching experience or who taught more than one subject.
- Teachers stated that the analysis in Report 3 was straightforward and easy to understand because the presentation was clear. They felt it helped them analyse

students' strengths and weaknesses rapidly and effectively. They held that the exemplars clearly illustrated students' performance and made it easy for schools to identify students' learning levels. It was claimed that information provided in Report 3 enabled teachers to adjust teaching, thereby achieving the aim of learning and teaching.

- Teachers mentioned that the examples of "Student performances of participating schools" in the annexes of Report 3 enabled them to understand students' performance. Teachers asked about the criteria used in selecting these examples. The HKEAA representatives replied that the selection of these examples was based on the information given by HKEAA staff members, markers and assistant examiners after they had centrally marked a huge number of scripts. Their views were gathered and so the examples selected were representative of the full cohort.
- Teachers stated that Report 4 specifically and clearly illustrated analysis of each correct answer and distractor in multiple choice items. They claimed that this enabled teachers to know students' common errors and helped them understand and analyse students' weaknesses. They also found that Report 4 provided schools with useful data for learning and teaching. However, individual teachers stated that the existing Report 4 was analysed in terms of sub-papers. Because of this, data of common items in different sub-papers were not integrated and comprehensive analysis of these items was not provided.
- Teachers found the OIA Reports very practical and convenient to use. They claimed the reports assisted them greatly in analysing students' strengths and weaknesses; in particular, the 3-year bar charts helped teachers understand students' performance.
- Teachers said that the hyperlinks provided on the OIA Reports enabled teachers to make instant reference for follow-up suggestions. They held that this helped improve learning and teaching to a very large extent.

### **3. Suggestions to Improve the Reports**

- Teachers suggested adding the reports and data from previous years to allow them to perform their own tracking and analysis.
- Teachers requested provision of schools' own attainment rates and schools could decide whether or not they wished to obtain them.

- Teachers suggested extending the report downloading period to 1.5 to 2 months for teachers' convenience. The OIA platform should be open after June so that teachers could conduct analysis during summer vacation using the data from the platform.
- Teachers suggested that data analysis and student exemplars should be separately provided in school reports and reports on non-Chinese speaking (NCS) student cohort. They believed this information could help them understand their students' performance.
- Teachers suggested that additional performance data on SEN students be provided to enable follow-up on SEN students' learning.
- Teachers suggested that individual school exemplars should be given in Reports 3 and 4. The information provided assisted teachers in analysing their students' performance.
- In Report 3, triangles were given indicating the overall percentages for each BC. Teachers suggested using exact percentages for each school and those of all participating schools. They held that the scale division was not detailed enough, only indicating 0%, 50% and 100%. It was suggested a more detailed scale division of percentages be used indicating 10%, 20% and so on.
- Report 4 was available in only PDF format. Teachers suggested providing WORD files for downloading. They also suggested that illustrations be given for common items. Teachers found that it would be convenient for them to analyse / do follow-up if the data of items with low percentages of correct responses could be grouped together and marked with an asterisk (\*) in the report. Moreover, they suggested that data of SEN students could be provided separately in another column of the report.
- Individual teachers expressed that it would be more convenient if teachers could access Report 4 directly without authorisation from the school heads.

### **3.1 Primary 3 Chinese Language**

- Teachers suggested that the reports would be more convenient for teachers to view if different colours or font styles were used to indicate items with higher or lower than the territory-wide percentages. Individual teachers suggested the reports should have the functions of “filter” and sort by percentage. They

mentioned that these functions enabled teachers to identify students' learning difficulties more quickly to facilitate follow-up.

- In Report 3, triangles were given indicating the overall percentages for each BC. Teachers suggested that it would be more concrete by providing exact percentages or figures next to each triangle. They felt that provision of exact percentages facilitated teachers' analysis and follow-up.
- In Report 3, the percentage of correct responses on each item was indicated in the Writing component. Teachers suggested that percentages of correct responses should be provided by genres, e.g. practical writing and short essays, rather than by sub-papers.
- Individual teachers suggested that an additional analysis of NCS students' performance should be given in Report 3 or two separate reports be given, one on Chinese-speaking students' performance and another on NCS students' performance. They felt that these reports could facilitate teachers' follow-up on NCS students' learning.
- Individual teachers suggested an additional analysis of SEN and NCS students' performance should be given in Report 3 because it could facilitate teachers' follow-up on these students' learning. Other individual teachers suggested that, in order to enable teachers to do follow-up actions on common problems of items involving filling in the blanks and short answers, if resources were available, analysis of such items should be covered in Report 4.
- Teachers suggested that an analysis of the Writing component should be added to Report 4. They said this analysis should include descriptions of students' performance on the aspects such as content, structure and vocabulary. Individual teachers stated that the content in Report 4 was comprehensive, with students' exemplars attached. Teachers hoped that the HKEAA could provide more detailed information so that they could have a further understanding of the required formats and correct vocabulary in practical writing.
- Individual teachers suggested that reading passages should be included in Report 4 for teachers' reference.
- Teachers found the OIA reports very useful for identifying students' strengths and weaknesses. They suggested that of the 3-year bar charts should be

provided in PDF and EXCEL formats for schools to download and store as well as facilitate tracking analysis.

- Individual teachers suggested adding the function of “filter” on the OIA platform. Teachers could select items on which students performed badly compared to the school’s own percentages or the territory-wide percentages. The data from these items would enable teachers to analyse performance and take follow-up.
- Individual teachers suggested relevant Cantonese or Putonghua sound tracks should be attached to each listening item on the OIA platform so as to facilitate teachers’ analysis and follow-up.
- Individual teachers hoped that a summary of all items could be provided on the OIA platform. Teachers could review all items at once without clicking a button to view each item.
- Individual teachers suggested that data should be provided on the OIA platform for tracking Primary 3 and Primary 6 students from the same cohort.
- Individual teachers suggested that there should be no time limit for downloading reports. The existing one-month downloading period was inadequate. After the due date, schools had to go through procedures to re-apply and this brought inconvenience to teachers.
- Individual teachers stated that they could not cut and edit the materials in the PDF version of some reports. Therefore they suggested that WORD version of the reports should also be provided.
- Teachers stated that Reports 3 and 4 were confidential documents containing the school and territory-wide data. School heads might not wish to share the reports with panel chairpersons and teachers. Therefore, teachers suggested that an additional version of the reports be provided without the school and territory-wide data. This additional version would allow teachers to share the reports among themselves. They could then perform their own analysis and do follow-up, thereby improving learning and teaching. Individual teachers suggested that the above-mentioned issues could be resolved if teachers made declarations to the effect that the information given would not be released to the public or copied once they received the reports.



### **3.2 Primary 3 English Language**

- Teachers suggested that each school's own data should be given in Reports 3 and 4. This included individual school data in the Writing and Speaking components together with their students' writing exemplars at different strata (e.g. high, medium, low). They felt that this would assist them in analysing their students' performance.
- Teachers suggested that they should have direct access to Reports 3 and 4 and that these reports should be open to the public (e.g. parents) in order not to waste resources.
- Teachers wanted a switch button to enable them to switch from Report 3 to 4 or vice versa for cross reference.
- In Report 3, teachers found it difficult to interpret the information with the triangles given on the performance scale. They suggested that exact percentages for the school as well as all participating schools should be shown beside the triangles to help them interpret the students' performance.
- Teachers suggested that information about the differences in percentage between their own schools and all participating schools be given in Report 4. Teachers believed that it would be even more useful for their analysis if the data on items with low percentages of correct responses were marked with an asterisk in the report.
- Teachers found that it would be even more useful for their analysis if the data of SEN students were provided separately in another column in the report. They asked for reports on NCS students to be provided to schools.
- Teachers suggested that the performances of students at Primary 3 and Primary 6 in the same cohort be made available for teachers' reference.

### **3.3 Primary 3 Mathematics**

- In Report 3, triangles were given indicating the overall percentages of correct responses of each learning unit. Teachers suggested that it would be more accurate and convenient for teachers' analysis and follow-up if exact percentages were provided next to the triangles. Moreover, teachers held that it would be more convenient for teachers' viewing if different colours were used

to indicate the 2 triangles, top and bottom, indicating the school and territory-wide average percentages of correct responses respectively. They also suggested using “up” and “down” signs to indicate whether the school percentages are higher or lower than the territory-wide percentages. They indicated that these signs would make it clearer and more convenient for teachers to perform analysis and take follow-up.

- Some teachers mentioned that using only “learning units” to indicate school percentages was not sufficient. However, most teachers accepted the use of “learning units”. Some teachers suggested that the discrepancy between the school and territory-wide percentages for each “learning unit” should be added. Individual teachers suggested that all items belonging to each learning unit should be listed in Report 3. The HKEAA representatives replied that relevant functions had been provided in Reports 1 and 2 as well as on the OIA platform. Some teachers suggested that provision of school-based examples in Report 3 would assist in learning and teaching.
- Teachers suggested that they would have an easier grasp and better understanding of students’ performance if a function for filtering items according to “dimensions” for analysis was added to Report 4. Teachers also suggested that they had a more comprehensive understanding of students’ performance when items were analysed according to “learning units”, rather than by sub-papers. Individual teachers suggested that it would be more effective for analysis if the reports were provided in editable formats (e.g. EXCEL, WORD). Some teachers suggested that illustrations should be given for common items in Report 4 for easy reference. Individual teachers indicated that analysis of school’s overall performance would be more ideal if other item types were included in Report 4, e.g. items requiring working steps.
- Teachers held that it would be suitable if all the items and analysis data could be displayed as single page interfaces of the OIA platform. They believed such display would help teachers analyse students’ strengths and weaknesses. However, some teachers said that they did not have an account on the OIA platform. The HKEAA representatives replied that the relevant accounts had been given to school heads and teachers agreed to take up this matter with their schools.

- The bar charts in the OIA reports indicated students' performance in the past 3 years in terms of "learning units". Individual teachers suggested that broken line graphs indicating tri-annual trends over the past 3 years should be added. Moreover, teachers stated that it would be better if all learning units were displayed in the 3-year bar chart. Individual teachers suggested that the analysis would be more effective if the 3-year learning unit bar charts could be edited for printing, downloading and storage.
- Teachers suggested adding the "filter" function to the OIA platform. This function could facilitate schools' search for items with higher or lower percentages than the territory-wide percentages. Some teachers thought it would be desirable if they could download the reports in EXCEL or WORD versions. Teachers indicated that these suggestions could facilitate discussion and analysis of items to be addressed as well as the design of teaching strategies, thereby improving learning and teaching.
- Teachers mentioned that the open period for using the OIA platform was rather short. They suggested the period should be extended until December. The extension could facilitate teachers' preparation for the new term. Some teachers said that they did not have OIA accounts and so the data could not be effectively used. The HKEAA representatives responded that the accounts concerned had been given to school heads. These accounts should be distributed according to their school-based practices.
- Individual teachers suggested that the information of the OIA reports could be exported and printed together with related items and marking schemes. They hoped that each item could be popped up and displayed on the same interface.
- Individual teachers suggested that percentages of correct responses for various dimensions should be provided in Reports 1 and 2. The HKEAA representatives responded that the relevant information had been displayed in the reports.
- Individual teachers suggested that analysis of students' performance according to "dimensions" and "learning units" be provided in Reports 1 and 2.
- Individual teachers suggested that the HKEAA should provide separate reports for the school and territory-wide NCS cohorts with analysis data and student exemplars. They believed these could assist teachers in understanding their students' performance.

- Individual teachers held that some schools would select Chinese and/or English versions of the Mathematics question papers for their students in the assessment. However, the teachers pointed out that no separate data were provided for schools taking only the English version of Mathematics assessment. They suggested providing reports of different versions to schools so as to assist teachers in understanding their students' performance.

#### **4. Views on the 2017 Research Study**

##### **4.1 General principles (including drilling and risks)**

- Teachers stated that it was necessary for TSA to exist because it helped them review their teaching effectiveness in school. They held that as long as the arrangement of daily teaching practice was appropriate, there was no need to drill students in order for them to handle TSA.
- Teachers pointed out that drilling had been greatly reduced after the measures for enhanced assessment were introduced.
- Teachers mentioned that as long as the difficulty level of items was appropriate, no drilling would be induced.

##### **4.1.1 Primary 3 Chinese Language**

- One teacher asserted that only views on reporting were collected in this meeting and thus the sector's views on the overall assessment were not reflected. An HKEAA representative responded that the purpose of this meeting was to collect views on reporting and the government would continue to collect feedback via various channels. This teacher's view on not supporting TSA had been recorded.

##### **4.1.2 Primary 3 Mathematics**

- Individual teachers mentioned that the EDB and HKEAA should enhance promotion in schools so as to prevent drilling in schools and thus alleviate pressure on students. An HKEAA representative agreed the importance of promotion and responded that the items and assessment design had been continued to improve and items were gauged at the BC requirements to reduce incentive for drilling.

- One teacher asked the EDB if they would use the TSA results to choose schools for inspection. An EDB representative replied that they did not have such any arrangement and stated that the “students’ performance in TSA” had been removed from the “Performance Indicators for Hong Kong Schools” in 2014. The EDB has enhanced the internal guidelines making it plain that TSA results are NOT to be used as an indicator of school performance.

## **4.2 Administration/Implementation arrangements**

- Teachers mentioned that SEN students should not be pre-assigned to take only one sub-paper. These students should take more than one sub-paper.

### **4.2.1 Primary 3 Chinese Language**

- Individual teachers stated that if schools’ TSA results had been steady over the previous 3 years, it was not necessary to conduct the TSA every year and receive school reports. Alternate-year arrangement or the assessment arranged every couple of years were suggested. It was also suggested that schools be allowed to choose whether or not to participate according to their school needs.
- Some teachers considered that both SEN and NCS students were unable to attain the BC standards. They claimed that these students’ learning progress was limited even when teaching was reinforced. Therefore, they suggested that it was not necessary to arrange assessments for a small portion of students not attaining the BC standards.
- Teachers found that there was a significant difference in the ability of Chinese Language between “Chinese-speaking” students and NCS students. NCS students had difficulty attaining the BC standards. Teachers suggested designing an adapted question paper of Chinese Language for NCS students by making reference to GCE. The adapted question paper could better reflect NCS students’ performances. An HKEAA representative responded that in order to ensure NCS students had the same opportunity to learn Chinese as local students, schools should encourage NCS students to participate in TSA. Also, the data collected can further facilitate the analysis of NCS students learning Chinese.
- A teacher expressed that it was not so meaningful to ask NCS students to take Chinese Language component of TSA since they did not know Chinese

Language at all. An HKEAA representative responded that in order to ensure NCS students had the same opportunity to learn Chinese as local students, schools should encourage NCS students to participate in TSA. Also, the data collected can further facilitate the analysis of NCS students learning Chinese.

- Individual teachers were concerned about whether or not the Basic Competency Assessment / Primary 3 TSA would be held this school year. An HKEAA representative mentioned that the Committee was still collecting views from various stakeholders pending an announcement. If TSA were held, the dates of the written assessments would be the same as those for the Primary 6 assessment.

#### **4.2.2 Primary 3 English Language**

- There was no need to conduct TSA because some teachers said that school-based assessments provided adequate information about students' performance.

#### **4.2.3 Primary 3 Mathematics**

- Individual teachers stated that TSA was necessary but they suggested that the assessment should be taken at any one level in primary school. It was suggested the assessment be conducted at Primary 5 level. This was because it was too early for Primary 3 students to take public assessment. Moreover, the assessment conducted at Primary 5 level could help students prepare examinations for Secondary 1.

### **4.3 Items, assessment design and exemplars**

- Teachers stated that items suited the level of Primary 3 students. They also mentioned that students found them very easy.
- Teachers suggested that open-ended items be included in TSA.
- Teachers suggested that the HKEAA provide more student exemplars on oral assessment for teachers' reference. An HKEAA representative replied that various channels and methods had been explored to produce more student exemplars.
- Teachers suggested that the HKEAA introduce an item bank. All items over previous years should be compiled according to dimensions. They believed that this enabled schools to analyse students' strengths and weaknesses and to understand students' performance from multiple perspectives.

### **4.3.1 Primary 3 Chinese Language**

- Individual teachers indicated that items were easier after enhancement to align them with BCs. However, Primary 3 students were quite young and whether or not they were suitable to do TSA should be taken into consideration.
- A teacher expressed that only BCs were measured in TSA but other learning dimensions were included in the Chinese Language curriculum which teachers were required to teach in classroom. The teacher held that “teaching” did not align with “assessment” and felt that teachers tended to design teaching contents based on the BCs due to the influence of TSA.
- Individual teachers suggested removing “practical writing” at Primary 3 level because students had to memorise the formats. Teachers expressed that students seldom wrote invitations, greetings and letters in their daily life. An HKEAA representative explained that “practical writing” was a basic requirement in the curriculum documents. Moreover, the Committee recommended that partial formats be provided to students and the marking scheme was also modified accordingly. Teachers also hoped that more oral exemplars were provided for reference and to improve learning and teaching.
- Individual teachers expressed that audio-visual did not have a direct relationship with language abilities and so suggested cancelling the CAV assessment. An HKEAA representative explained that the BCs involved audio-visual and “able to understand simple audio-visual messages” was stated in both Reading and Listening skills.
- Individual teachers suggested that the HKEAA provide video clips of CAV for teachers’ reference and analysis. An HKEAA representative replied that teachers could log onto the STAR platform to view these video clips of TSA. Starting from 2017, the HKEAA representative added that these video clips had been posted onto the HKEAA’s website.

### **4.3.2 Primary 3 English Language**

- One teacher opined that the TSA items had become very easy. It seemed meaningless to take part in the assessment since the data was unable to identify the weaknesses of students.
- Teachers suggested that open-ended question types be included in TSA.

- Teachers were not familiar with the Question Intents. They opined that more information facilitating teachers' understanding of the Question Intents should be given to teachers.
- It was suggested that video clips of speaking components be provided to schools to facilitate schools' understanding of students' performance.

#### **4.3.3 Primary 3 Mathematics**

- Individual teachers suggested that the HKEAA introduce an item bank. All items over previous years should be compiled according to dimensions for schools to analyse students' strengths and weaknesses and to understand students' performance from multiple perspectives.
- Individual teachers suggested that the HKEAA provide an online item bank including analysis of each item. An HKEAA representative stated that an online item bank had already been provided on the existing STAR platform for teachers' reference. The HKEAA representative added that schools could log in via HKEdCity website.

#### **4.4 Publicity and promotion**

- It was suggested that training on own school data analysis be held on teacher development days.
- Individual teachers indicated that some school heads did not understand much about the contents of the new reports. They said that teachers had to write this kind of reports on their own and so wasted teachers' time and effort. They suggested more functions illustrating the nature and content of the reports be organised for school heads.
- Teachers suggested that the promotion of the OIA platform be enhanced. They believed that this enabled school management to have a better understanding and knowledge about the advantages of using the platform so that more teachers could use it.
- Teachers suggested that the HKEAA organise workshops introducing the contents of various kinds of reports immediately after the release of results.
- Individual teachers asked if suggestions made in the FGMs were suitable for the assessment at other key learning stages. An HKEAA representative replied that the discussion in the FGMs focused on the 2017 Research Study. Since both



Primary 3 and Primary 6 were at primary levels, the HKEAA representative added that the suggestions for Primary 3 might be suitable for Primary 6.

#### **4.5 WLTS and STAR platforms**

- Individual teachers suggested that the WLTS platform be improved. They indicated that some hyperlinks on the WLTS were obsolete and some interactive assessment tasks which were written in FLASH could not be displayed on tablets.

##### **4.5.1 Primary 3 Chinese Language**

- Individual teachers stated that the STAR platform was not stable; it was difficult to share assessment tasks with other teachers. Furthermore, individual teachers mentioned that they had difficulty in using the recording function of “說話加油站” and suggested the related platform be enhanced.
- Individual teachers reflected that assessment materials on speaking were inadequate in the market and hoped that the HKEAA could provide more exemplars. An HKEAA representative suggested teachers could make good use of “說話加油站” on WLTS as it contained student exemplars for teachers’ reference. However, a teacher said that “說話加油站” exemplars were only provided on “story-telling” and hoped there were exemplars on “group interaction”.
- A teacher mentioned that a message “under maintenance” appeared on the WLTS when they downloaded materials and so suggested improving the platform.

##### **4.5.2 Primary 3 English Language**

- Individual teachers commented that some functions (e.g. sharing assessment tasks) of the STAR platform could be made more user-friendly.
- Teachers said that the resource materials on the WLTS website were very useful to teachers.

##### **4.5.3 Primary 3 Mathematics**

- Individual teachers stated that the “suggestions for improvement” provided on the WLTS were insufficient. They hoped that there would be more suggestions on teaching.

Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority  
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**Summary of Teachers' Views on Assessment Items of all Subjects**  
**and the Enhanced Reports under the 2017 Research Study**

*Assessment papers and items are aligned with Basic Competencies and extra drilling is not required*

1. Most teachers had a positive response to the item design of the 2017 Research Study. They considered that the items were aligned with Basic Competencies, relevant to students' life experience and suitable for Primary 3 students in terms of difficulty, length of passages and assessment time, so extra drilling was not required. Schools' main views on the subjects were as follows:

(i) Chinese Language:

- It was generally agreed that the difficulty level of the assessment papers was appropriate to students' abilities, and the items were straightforward and simple.
- The length of the reading texts was appropriate. Most students had ample time to answer and review.
- The items and wording were comprehensible. Most students were able to answer the questions without extra drilling.
- The number of "reverse questions" was appropriate.

(ii) English Language:

- It was generally agreed that the difficulty level of the assessment items was appropriate. There were no complicated items.
- The papers covered different text types, the contents of which were authentic and related to students' everyday life.
- The pictures in the reading and listening papers were clear and of appropriate size.
- The length of assessments was appropriate. Students could complete the tasks within the time allowed.

(iii) Mathematics:

- It was generally agreed that the difficulty level of the assessment papers was appropriate. Almost all students could complete the tasks within the time allowed. Very few students failed to finish the items on the last two pages.
- Each item was aligned with Basic Competencies.

- Teachers indicated that student exemplars of open-ended questions were very important and hoped that more exemplars would be provided.

*Enhanced reports facilitate provision of feedback and reduce teachers' workload*

2. Teachers generally opined the positive role of assessment reports in providing feedback to learning and teaching. On the whole, the enhanced school reports could meet the needs of different schools, helping schools and teachers, on a subject basis, flexibly select appropriate assessment reports to serve different purposes<sup>26</sup>. Meanwhile, the Committee was aware that among the four types of reports, the information analysis report was most welcomed. Teachers could grasp students' strengths and weaknesses through the analysis of the incorrect responses in the information analysis report. Also, this report alleviated teachers' workload in analysing TSA data. Due to teachers' positive feedback on the information analysis report, this report has been extended to Primary 6 and Secondary 3 TSA in 2017.

3. The main views of teachers were as follows:

- Each type of report could provide schools with useful data for feedback;
- The existing version (with school data and overall data) and the newly introduced versions (simplified version, consolidated report on Basic Competencies by item groups and information analysis report) could give feedback to schools to enhance teaching effectiveness;
- Teachers affirmed the value of the consolidated report on Basic Competencies by item groups and the information analysis report, considering that these reports could provide appropriate feedback and promote teachers' professional development;
- Teachers opined that the consolidated report on Basic Competencies by item groups could give an effective analysis of students' strengths and weaknesses and the triangular illustrations could clearly show the percentages at the territory-wide and school levels;
- Teachers indicated that the information analysis report provided qualitative analysis that suggested possible reasons for incorrect responses. This enabled frontline teachers to identify students'

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<sup>26</sup> Including reviewing the design of school-based assessments, facilitating curriculum planning, adjusting teaching strategies and rendering learning support, etc.

strengths and weaknesses and effectively provide feedback to learning and teaching. Also, teachers' workload in analysing items had been lightened;

- Some teachers recommended that data on the performance of special educational needs and non-Chinese speaking students be provided to help teachers follow up the learning of these students;
- Some teachers recommended that individual school reports and student exemplars be provided to help teachers have a firmer grasp of students' performance in writing and speaking assessments.