

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

**Report on
Review of the Territory-wide System Assessment**

**Education Bureau
February 2016**

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**The Coordinating Committee on Basic Competency Assessment and
Assessment Literacy
Review on the Territory-wide System Assessment
Preliminary Recommendations**

1. The Coordinating Committee on Basic Competency Assessment and Assessment Literacy (Committee) has attached great importance to the views of stakeholders in the discussions of the review on the Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA). In the past few months, different groups and organisations put forward views and valuable suggestions that the Committee has thoroughly considered and followed up.

2. The Committee considers that the review of TSA should be premised on the promotion of quality education and the following core values:

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

3. The Committee and its working groups have studied in detail the purpose, function and implementation situation of TSA. They reaffirm the intent and value of the establishment of TSA, and recognise the functional use of TSA data to provide feedback to learning and teaching, which include:

- at the school level, the use of related information can enhance the school-based curriculum and teaching practices for more effective student learning; and
- at the territory-wide level, the use of TSA data can facilitate the Education Bureau (EDB) to identify priorities and directions for implementing measures to support learning.

The Committee takes the view that TSA shall continue to be carried out to retain the functions above.

4. TSA has been implemented for years. The Government has initiated enhancement measures on certain arrangements of TSA in recent years. The Committee is aware of the concerns about TSA raised recently in part of the community, including the appropriateness of assessment items, over-drilling practice, different stakeholders' perception of the stakes involved and the provision of support to schools and students. The Committee considers that modifications to administrative arrangement of TSA (e.g. conducting TSA in alternate years or on a sampling basis) are unable to effectively address the various concerns in the

community¹.

5. To minimise drilling for TSA and reflect more clearly the intent of the assessment of basic competency, the Committee recognises that both the assessment paper and question design could be adjusted. The reports distributed to schools after the conduct of TSA could also adopt different formats to facilitate the enhancement of school-based curriculum and teaching practice while reflecting the low-stakes nature of TSA. The Committee takes the view that the adjusted assessment papers and question design together with the different formats of reporting should be implemented as a tryout arrangement in 2016, of which the positive outcomes would inform the 2017 territory-wide implementation. The tryout should be of a representative scale to ensure its validity.

6. In view of the account in paragraph 5, the Committee recommends an implementation plan for a tryout study at Primary 3 level in 2016 with the following objectives:

- (i) to validate whether the revamped TSA papers and item design proposed by the relevant working group would uphold the reliability and validity of assessment while aligning with the requirements of basic competencies of Primary 3 students to tie in with the curriculum and student learning;
- (ii) to try out different reporting formats to meet the needs of individual schools;
- (iii) to strengthen the provision of professional support measures for schools on homework policy, assessment literacy, enhancement of learning and teaching (e.g. via the promotion of reading) as well as TSA in the course of the tryout. Public education would also need to be strengthened so as to enhance stakeholders' awareness of the TSA as part of the concept of "assessment for learning" with a view to enhancing quality education;
- (iv) at the territory-wide level, to keep track on the attainment of basic competencies of all students and to provide continuous data for other related studies; and
- (v) to demonstrate in good faith the low-stakes nature of TSA that it would not exert pressure on school sponsoring bodies, schools and parents; and to foster mutual trust through participation, sharing and collaboration in promoting quality education with a view to facilitating effective and pleasurable student learning.

7. On the 2016 Tryout Study, the Committee recommends the following specific arrangements for consideration:

¹ For example: conducting TSA in alternate years would only mean alternate-year drills for schools adopting over-drilling practice which affect learning and teaching at different year levels. In addition, the arrangement renders it impossible to track student progress; conducting TSA on a sampling basis would not alleviate pressure on schools who are uncertain about which students are to be selected for assessment.

- (i) School participation:
 - propose the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) to invite 50 primary schools of different types (about 10% of the primary schools in the territory with each participating as a unit) to participate in the Tryout. Other schools might participate on a voluntary basis.²
- (ii) Reporting formats:
 - propose providing schools with options for receiving school reports in the existing format (providing correct response rates of each item and the average correct response rates in the territory), or in the simplified format (reporting overall performance of students in each basic competency supplemented with sample items).
 - the territory-wide report to be generated to adopt the method set out in Item 6.5(i) in Chapter 6 of the Report and Recommendations.
- (iii) Collecting students' non-academic data:
 - propose including questionnaire survey to collect students' non-academic data (e.g. time spent for extra-curricular activities, learning interests, learning habits and other relevant data) so as to gain a better understanding of the factors affecting learning performance and to provide further assistance for student learning.
- (iv) Strengthening support measures:
 - propose organising seminars and providing school-based support services for schools participating in the Tryout Study; and encouraging participation of schools to develop and parents to use the “Web-based Learning and Teaching Support” (WLTS) initiative.

The arrangement for 2017 assessment will appropriately incorporate the feedback of the 2016 Tryout Study. Such feedback will also serve as reference in deliberating the medium and long-term directions of TSA.

8. On assessment papers and question design, major recommendations of the Committee include:

- (i) Principles of modification
 - learning needs of students;
 - alleviating the learning burden on students;
 - aligning with the spirit of curriculum; and

² If an individual school declines invitation, the HKEAA will invite another school of the same type as replacement as this facilitates the study on the appropriateness of the papers. If there are numerous high achievers taking the assessment, the results may indicate items being easy. Therefore, participation of individual students on a voluntary basis is not recommended.

- adopting appropriate choice of words and phrases in assessment materials.

(ii) Primary 3 Chinese Language

- the number of texts in the reading assessment will be adjusted from three to two; the total number of words per sub-paper will be limited to not more than 1 200 and the number of items will not exceed 20; practical writing will only be included in one of the sub-papers of reading to avoid giving undue weight to practical writing;
- in the writing assessment, certain information required for practical writing will be provided, such as salutation, complimentary close, greetings and date of a letter, etc.; the marking criteria on the format of practical writing will be adjusted; student exemplars demonstrating the attainment of basic competency will be provided; and
- a review of “five-options-choose-two” items, items requiring “reverse thinking” and so forth in each paper will be conducted.

(iii) Primary 3 English Language

- the number of parts in the reading assessment 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 words of the whole paper will be capped at 400;
- 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;
- items expecting answers in the past tense in the writing assessment will be scrapped, such as writing a recount; and
- assessment items on basic book concepts should be avoided.

(iv) Primary 3 Mathematics

- the number of items will be reduced, with an immediate cut of around 20%;
- only one basic competency will be assessed in each item; and
- items requiring solving linking problems will be minimised.

9. To address various concerns in the community about TSA (including over-drilling, different stakeholders’ perception of the stakes involved and the provision of support to schools and students), the Committee has made the following recommendations:

(i) Over-drilling

- 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 of students;

- through enhancing training and development for 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 strategies and teaching resources, as well as to improve the assessment literacy, understanding that over-drilling is ineffective to facilitate student learning; and
- 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.

(ii) Stakeholders' perception of the stakes involved in TSA

- EDB to reassure the education sector of the low-stakes 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 should be removed from the focus questions under "8.1 Academic Performance" of the "Performance Indicators" to alleviate schools' concerns. In addition, provision on schools' good use of TSA data to provide feedback to learning and teaching should be further emphasised under "3.3 Performance Assessment";
- 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".

(iii) Strengthening support for learning

- to organise seminars and workshops for different stakeholders in school;
- to encourage experience sharing among schools on the use of TSA data to enhance the curriculum and enrich teaching activities;
- to further promote the use of the "Web-based Learning and Teaching Support" platform (including exercises and learning materials that are developed based on TSA data) to support and facilitate learning and teaching;
- 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 learning; and
- to provide effective support to schools.

- (iv) Enhancing transparency and strengthening communication with parents
- the EDB to disseminate information related to TSA through various channels to enhance transparency and strengthen communication with parents, helping them to understand the purpose, implementation and function of TSA.

10. In the medium and long run, the Committee has made the following recommendations:

- (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 school-based curriculum and learning activities; as well as strengthening the communication and collaboration among various sectors, such as:
- 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;
 - for principals (including aspiring principals, newly-appointed principals): promoting among them the understanding of using TSA information for leading the school in enhancing learning and teaching;
 - 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;
 - for prospective teachers: equipping them with the understanding of the concept of the TSA design and its implementation as well as the knowledge of assessment for learning;
 - for parents: promoting among them the understanding of the concept of assessment for learning, strengthening home-school cooperation and communication for better understanding of their children's learning needs; and
 - HKEAA officers: promoting assessment for learning through enhancing assessment items and reports.
- (ii) in the long run, to review the overall arrangements for basic competency assessment and the formulation of basic competencies, to continue to draw reference from the assessment practices in other places;
- (iii) to expand the existing central online assessment bank, "Student Assessment" to better serve everyday learning, teaching and

assessment;

- (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;
- (v) to review the arrangements of basic competency assessment for students with special educational needs and non-Chinese speaking students;
- (vi) to ensure the interests of students should come first in the practices of effective learning and teaching in accordance with the 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
- (vii) to review the above recommendations on an on-going basis for improvement.

Chapter 1 Introduction and Purposes

1.1 Established in October 2014, the Coordinating Committee on Basic Competency Assessment and Assessment Literacy (Committee) is tasked with recommending directions for the development of Basic Competency Assessments (including Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA) and Student Assessment, details of which are set out in paragraph 2.2 below) as well as the enhancement of assessment literacy among schools. Terms of reference for the Committee are set out in Annex 1.

1.2 The Education Bureau (EDB) announced in late October 2015 that the Committee would conduct a comprehensive review of the implementation of TSA. To strengthen the representation of relevant stakeholders, the Committee introduced members from the area of home-school cooperation and representing secondary and primary schools..

1.3 Two working groups have been set up under the Committee to conduct an in-depth study of the reporting and administration and the papers and question design of TSA respectively, with a view to recommending short, medium and long-term improvement measures.

1.4 The preliminary recommendations of the review on TSA were submitted by the Committee to EDB on 4 February 2016.

1.5 This report aims to brief EDB on the background, scope and core values of the TSA review conducted by the Committee, its consultation with stakeholders and the views collected therefrom, as well as the recommendations made by the working groups.

Chapter 2 Background

Education Reform and Establishment of TSA

2.1 In 2000, the Education Commission proposed to introduce 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 TSA is one of the components of Basic Competency Assessments. Other than TSA, Basic Competency Assessments also cover Student Assessment and Web-based Learning and Teaching Support (WLTS). Student Assessment 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. As for WLTS, it is an online platform for the development of students’ basic competencies, providing ready-made learning activities and materials developed to address learning difficulties for teachers’ reference and use.

2.3 Basic Competencies are the essential knowledge and skills acquired by students in relation to the learning targets and objectives set out in the curriculum for each key stage, in order to learn effectively at next stage.

2.4 TSA is an 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). Basic competencies form part of the curriculum. Students are expected to acquire the basic competencies in the three subjects in order to proceed effectively to the next key learning stage.

2.5 TSA is a low-stakes assessment. At the student level, 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, EDB does not use TSA results to assess the performance of schools. Since 2014, TSA has been removed from the Key Performance Measures for primary schools. TSA is neither a tool for ranking schools nor an indicator for closing schools.

Implementation of TSA

2.6 Implementation details of TSA are at *Annex 2*.

2.7 Since its introduction in 2004 (Primary 3, Primary 6³ and Secondary 3 TSA were first conducted in 2004, 2005 and 2006 respectively), TSA has served the function of promoting “assessment for learning” by providing schools with information that helps teachers identify the overall strengths and weaknesses of students and formulate plans to improve the effectiveness of learning and teaching in light of the assessment data and their schools’ development needs.

2.8 On the day TSA results are released, the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) will upload the territory-wide report, full set of papers and marking schemes onto the Basic Competency Assessments website for public viewing. Schools can download their own school reports on the same day.⁴

At the school level: providing feedback to learning and teaching

2.9 The school report not only provides the overall attainment rates of a school’s students in Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics (starting from 2014, individual primary schools are no longer provided with the attainment rates in basic competencies), but also include item analysis and other supplementary data (which serve to provide feedback to schools). In general, after analysing students’ performance in TSA, schools will follow up through various measures, such as adjusting the teaching content, revamping the design of worksheets and assessments, and arranging after-school remedial programmes to cater for learner diversity.

2.10 For schools which seek to improve or enhance curriculum planning as well as learning and teaching after self-inspection, they can participate in professional development programmes and various professional sharing sessions and apply for school-based support services under the existing mechanism. On the part of EDB, it promotes the sharing of good teaching practices and the use of online resources among schools and teachers. On-site school-based support services will be provided by EDB in light of the needs and circumstances of individual schools to strengthen schools’ curriculum leadership and enhance teachers’ understanding of the curriculum. Such support also enables their integration of basic competencies with daily learning and assessments, and to reflect on and provide feedback to learning and teaching by making use of relevant evidence and information, such as students’

³ Starting from 2014, Primary 6 TSA is implemented in every odd-number year (i.e. 2015, 2017 ...).

⁴ Schools can access information (including territory-wide student performance in different learning areas) via the Basic Competency Assessments website, and download the school level reports by using the login password for analysis and assessment of the effectiveness of learning and teaching.

learning in classroom, student assignments, and results of internal and external assessments, etc. In this way, schools will be able to help students acquire basic competencies and proceed effectively to the next key learning stage after identifying their strengths and weaknesses.

At the territory-wide level: identifying the focus of support measures

2.11 At the territory-wide level, TSA data enables the Government to review education policies and provide focused support for schools. EDB has been making reference to TSA data for tracking the levels and changes of local students' performance in Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics, and a "TSA Report" is prepared by HKEAA and made available on its website every year. EDB also makes reference to the overall performance in TSA and basic competencies of all students in the territory for determining the directions and focuses of professional training and school-based support services, such as enhancing teaching of reading and school-based assessment strategies. To address the learning difficulties of students, EDB have conducted case studies and gathered the views of educators through focus group meetings to underpin the development of WLTS – a learning and teaching website offering suggestions on follow-up measures for teachers' use or reference to help students acquire the basic competencies in an effective manner.

2.12 Back in 2001, the Curriculum Development Council (CDC) published a report entitled "*Learning to learn: The Way Forward in Curriculum Development*", which suggested a change in schools' assessment practices and proposed that Basic Competency Assessments should be used as a complementary tool to improve learning and teaching.⁵ To take forward the above recommendations, the "*Basic Education Curriculum Guide – Building on Strengths (Primary 1-Secondary 3)*" released in 2002 further suggested that schools should develop assessment policy, emphasise "assessment for learning", and continuously review and provide feedback on students' performance so that students know how to improve their learning.⁶ Furthermore, in the "*Basic Education Curriculum Guide – To Sustain, Deepen and Focus on Learning to Learn (Primary 1-6)*" updated in 2014, schools are advised to review and analyse students' overall performance and devise appropriate follow-up measures by making good use of the data in school reports in a bid to enhance learning and teaching strategies and learning outcome.⁷

⁵ Curriculum Development Council (2001) – *Learning to learn: The Way Forward in Curriculum Development*, p.82.

http://cd1.edb.hkedcity.net/cd/EN/Content_2908/e04/chapter4_78-94.pdf

⁶ Curriculum Development Council (2002) – Booklet 5 of *Basic Education Curriculum Guide – Building on Strengths (Primary 1-Secondary 3)*, p.13.

http://cd1.edb.hkedcity.net/cd/EN/Content_2909/html/index.html

⁷ Curriculum Development Council (2014) – Section 5.5.3, Chapter 5 of *Basic Education Curriculum Guide – To Sustain, Deepen and Focus on Learning to Learn (Primary 1-6)*.

<https://cd.edb.gov.hk/becg/english/chapter5.html>

Enhancement of TSA

2.13 Since the introduction of TSA in 2004, 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.

2.14 In a questionnaire survey conducted by HKEAA in May 2008, 96% of the responded schools indicated that their teachers had made reference to TSA data in enhancing teaching plans.⁸ Notwithstanding the intended low-stakes purpose of TSA, there have been voices that TSA has exerted great pressure on Primary 6 students because they have to sit for their internal school examinations, TSA and Pre-Secondary One Hong Kong Attainment Test (Pre-S1 HKAT) within weeks in June and July.

2.15 To lessen the pressure on Primary 6 students and to preserve the core functions of Pre-S1 HKAT and TSA, 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, 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, EDB undertook to review TSA, including its implementation arrangements, reporting functions, assessment coverage and items.

2.16 To gauge the views of various stakeholders on TSA arrangements, HKEAA conducted five focus group meetings in end-2012.⁹ EDB also met representatives of various stakeholders in 2013.¹⁰ In addition, nine focus group meetings were conducted by HKEAA in September 2013 to meet heads and deputy heads of primary

⁸ Most teachers found the school reports useful for analysing students' performance. They agreed that TSA could provide an objective framework for schools to identify areas where their students were faring relatively well and areas where further improvements could be made, including the possibility of 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 modified their design of learning exercises, homework, tests or examination papers to match TSA.

⁹ 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.

¹⁰ 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.

and secondary schools, primary school curriculum leaders, panel heads and subject teachers.

2.17 Upon considering the views of various stakeholders, 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-number years and Pre-S1 HKAT in even-number 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.

Chapter 3 Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA) Review in 2015

3.1 Since the introduction of TSA in 2004, EDB has continued to closely monitor the views and concerns of stakeholders. The Committee is aware that though TSA is designed as a low-stakes assessment, some schools view that TSA is one of the justifications for the closure of schools. Notwithstanding that HKEAA has no longer provided the basic competencies attainment rates to primary schools and EDB has removed TSA from the 'Key Performance Measures' for primary schools since 2014, schools are still worrying that EDB will use the TSA data to assess the performances of schools. In addition, teachers in individual schools tend to ask students to do supplementary exercises because of TSA. Some parents think that TSA has created tremendous pressure on schools and students. Over-drilling of students because of TSA by schools would affect students' motivation to learn or the balance of the curriculum of schools. The questions in some supplementary exercises in the name of TSA far exceed the requirement of the basic competencies or even do not meet the curriculum requirements. Some parents are anxious about the above situation.

3.2 As mentioned in Chapter 1, to address public concerns about TSA, the Secretary for Education announced in late October 2015 that the Committee would conduct a comprehensive review of the operation and implementation arrangements of TSA. To strengthen the participation of different stakeholders, the Committee introduced members from the area of home-school cooperation and representing secondary and primary schools. The membership list of the Committee is at *Annex 3*.

Scope of review

3.3 The focus of the review includes examination of the original design concepts and objectives of TSA and consideration of whether the existing arrangements of basic competence assessment are able to achieve the desired objectives, which include providing information for schools and the Government, improving school curriculum planning and enhancing learning and teaching, as well as strengthening the provision of professional support for schools and teachers. Recommendations will also be made on the implementation of TSA, including short, medium and long-term improvement measures for addressing public concerns (e.g. over-drilling, enhancing support for stakeholders, strengthening overall assessment, and promoting assessment literacy).

3.4 Specifically, the review seeks to:

- (i) examine the background and objectives of TSA, and ascertain whether the current TSA arrangements are in line with the desired objectives;
- (ii) identify possible solutions by assessing whether the existing arrangements of TSA should be modified, whether there are alternatives capable of retaining the objectives and functions of TSA, and whether the objectives

- of TSA should be modified;
- (iii) identify improvement measures to be implemented in the short to long terms;
 - (iv) address public concerns and misunderstandings, reinforce the provision of support and resources, and promote the assessment literacy among various sectors.

3.5 In the course of deliberation, members consider that the review of TSA should be premised on the promotion of quality education and the following core values:

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

3.6 During discussions, members shared the local experiences of how to make good use of TSA data to enhance learning and teaching, and learnt about the overseas practices of systemic assessment. Members also noted the concerns and views of various stakeholders on TSA (please refer to Chapter 4 below).

Task of the working groups

3.7 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 and reporting and the papers and question design of TSA respectively. 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. Details of the work undertaken by the two working groups are set out in Chapter 5.

Chapter 4 Consultation Exercises and Community Concerns

Consultation exercises

4.1 The Committee attached great importance to the views of stakeholders in conducting the review of TSA. In this connection, a number of seminars have been conducted to meet different stakeholders, including school heads, frontline teachers, parents and parent-teacher associations of various districts, and parent concern groups, etc. In addition, EDB has accepted invitations of a number of advisory bodies to give briefings on the review of TSA. The organisations that EDB has met are listed at *Annex 4*, and the views gathered from stakeholders are set out at *Annex 5*. EDB has also received written submissions from the public¹¹, a summary of which is at *Annex 6*.

Community concerns

4.2 The community concerns over TSA are summarised below.

Use of TSA data

4.3 Some members of the public query how schools can enhance student learning and how EDB can render appropriate school support by identifying learning difficulties with the use of TSA data if reports and assessment results of TSA for individual students are not provided. Some parents consider that internal school assessments are sufficient for providing feedback to teaching and learning and they are unable to see the actual functions of TSA. As for schools, some are concerned that TSA data might be used by EDB as justification for exerting pressure on schools.

Appropriateness of assessment items

4.4 There are public views that TSA items are getting more and more difficult and tricky, and some of them are even beyond the scope of basic competencies. Besides, given the increasing number and length of assessment items, some stakeholders take the view that EDB should narrow the disparity in the levels of difficulty between mock TSA exercises designed by publishers and the actual TSA items.

Culture of drilling

4.5 Some stakeholders opine that given the assessment content and the tricky and diverse item types, it is not possible for students to handle TSA without drilling. As such, TSA is the main cause of over-drilling and increase in homework, which in fact will dampen students' interest in learning and deprive students of the rest time they need. On the other hand, there are some stakeholders who consider that the

¹¹ Members of the public may send their written submissions by email (asteam@edb.gov.hk) or by post.

main cause of over-drilling is the competition among schools rather than TSA. The practice of drilling will continue even without TSA.

Different stakeholders' perception of the stakes of TSA

4.6 Despite the low-stakes design of TSA, some consider that TSA may affect students' advancement in studies as well as the allocation of school places and resources. Some schools indicate that they do not regard TSA as a low-stakes assessment, quoting their experience that EDB officials have enquired about their learning and teaching because of their TSA performance. Some parents also state that TSA has exerted immense pressure to schools and students. Over-drilling of students because of TSA affects the learning motivation of students or the balance of curriculum of schools.

Support for schools and students

4.7 Some stakeholders do not have sufficient understanding of the TSA-related support provided by EDB, and members of the community are unable to recognise EDB's support for schools and students in connection with TSA. In fact, as far as support measures are concerned, some 360 primary schools received school-based support services in the 2014/15 school year. Of these, about 280 received support on Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics.

4.8 Separately, EDB has developed WLTS (please refer to paragraph 2.2 above for details) to serve the function of "assessment for learning". Learning and teaching materials incorporating the components of "learning, teaching and assessment" are available on this platform to support learning and teaching. Yet, there are parents who opine that support cannot be provided in a timely manner to enhance students' learning as TSA data are not released to schools until the year following the assessment.

Public education

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

Chapter 5 Working Groups

(1) The Working Group on Administration and Reporting (Working Group on Administration)

5.1 The Working Group on Administration (membership list at *Annex 7*) has held two meetings to study the feasibility of various proposals on the administration and reporting of TSA, and to discuss medium and long-term recommendations in light of the existing TSA and related public concerns.

Existing administrative arrangements for Primary 3 TSA

5.2 Primary 3 TSA consists of written assessments of Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics, oral assessments of language subjects and audio-visual assessments of Chinese Language.

Oral assessments

5.3 Oral assessments of Chinese Language and English Language are conducted over two days, with a total of four sessions. Students are randomly selected to form a group in one of the four sessions and are assessed by two Oral Examiners, one internal and one external. To reduce the workload of schools' executive officers and Oral Examiners, an Assessment Administration Assistant is sent by HKEAA to each school to provide administrative support. This is to ensure that oral assessments will be carried out smoothly. Please see *Annex 8* for details.

Written assessments

5.4 Primary 3 TSA normally takes place in mid-June. Invigilation is undertaken internally by teachers, assisted by an Assessment Administration Assistant sent by HKEAA.

5.5 Since 2008, HKEAA has been implementing measures to support students with special educational needs and non-Chinese speaking students, and the Onscreen Marking System has been used for marking TSA papers. Please see *Annex 9* for details.

Existing reporting formats for Primary 3 TSA

5.6 Starting from 2014, primary schools are no longer provided with their students' attainment rates of basic competencies in each subject. Reports for primary schools only include the data of each dimension (competency) in each sub-paper. Two types of reports are made available for schools: school reports (without data of the attainment rates of basic competencies) and item analysis reports. Neither of these will show the assessment results of individual students. Such reports are strictly confidential and access is restricted to the schools concerned only.

5.7 In 2014, HKEAA developed Phase 1 of the Interactive Online Item Analysis Report. Teachers can login the system and view item data, items of each

sub-paper, marking schemes, as well as student assessment results in the preceding three years by basic competency/assessment objective/learning unit. This initiative enables schools to better understand the learning progress of their students. Please see *Annex 10* for details.

Major views on administration and reporting of Primary 3 TSA

5.8 Major views of different stakeholders on the administration and reporting of Primary 3 TSA are as follows:

- (i) Some schools and teachers consider TSA a high-stakes assessment on the grounds that EDB officials might hold a school accountable for unpleasing TSA data and use such data as justifications for closure of schools or for allocation of resources.
- (ii) Some teachers, parents and academics express that there are problems with the papers of Primary 3 TSA, e.g. the assessment is too difficult or the items are too tricky, already beyond the basic competency requirements of Primary 3 students.
- (iii) Some teachers opine that TSA has created additional pressure and workload on them.
- (iv) Some parents consider that TSA has given rise to over-drilling and heavier homework, affecting the physical and mental wellness of children.
- (v) There are members of the community and parents who do not understand TSA and fail to appreciate how professional support benefits teachers and students.
- (vi) There are comments that TSA has become a political tool which has jeopardised the quality of education.
- (vii) Some academics, schools and educational institutions opine that better alternatives (such as conducting TSA on a sampling basis, in alternate years or only at Primary 6 and Secondary 3 levels) could be explored to replace the current arrangements.

Recommendations to address community concerns

5.9 The Working Group on Administration emphasises the principle that all discussions in the review should be conducted from a professional perspective, and as students are the key party in learning, their interests should always come first.

5.10 To address community concerns, the Working Group on Administration first had a look at issues like culture of drilling, stakeholders' understanding of the stakes involved, support for schools and public education, and recommended directions for improvement.

Culture of drilling

- (i) There are views that the levels of difficulty and the formats of TSA items are indirect incentives for drilling. The Working Group on Papers and Question Design has conducted a detailed study of the design of TSA items and the study is expected to help smooth out the issue of drilling.

Different stakeholders' understanding of the stakes involved in TSA

- (ii) The Working Group on Administration observes that the deviations in the actual implementation of TSA are associated with the pressure on schools resulting from the use of TSA data by EDB or school sponsoring bodies. As such, the Working Group on Administration recommends that EDB should help schools understand better how the Government uses TSA data and foster their trust in this regard.

Support for schools

- (iii) The Working Group on Administration suggests that EDB should promote the wider use of WLTS and the central online assessment bank of "Student Assessment" (SA) to strengthen support for schools and teachers.

Public education

- (iv) The Working Group on Administration recommends that the understanding of the "assessment for learning" concept should be deepened among schools, parents, school sponsoring bodies and the public with a view to enhancing the overall assessment literacy in the long run.

Recommendations on administrative and reporting arrangements

5.11 In view of the community concerns mentioned above, the Working Group has identified the following key issues for discussion regarding the administrative and reporting arrangements of TSA:

- (i) Assessment cycle: The Working Group on Administration has discussed a number of administrative proposals, including abolishing Primary 3 TSA, suspending Primary 3 TSA for one year in 2016, conducting Primary 3 TSA in alternate years or on a two/three-year cycle (in odd-number or even-number years), conducting TSA on a sampling basis (with student, school or subject as the sampling unit), and conducting TSA at Primary 4.
- (ii) Minimising drilling: Some stakeholders consider the types of TSA items one of the incentives for drilling. Different views have been expressed at the meetings. Some suggest that item types should be standardised to discourage drilling, while others are not in favour of standardising, which they believe will only exacerbate the drilling problem.
- (iii) Providing objective data for the Government's reference: The Committee agrees that TSA data are valuable reference to the Government in identifying priorities and directions for the formulation of policies and support measures.
- (iv) Providing feedback to learning and teaching: The Committee reaffirms the function of TSA in providing feedback to learning and teaching at the school level, and takes the view that the existing format of school reports could be fine-tuned to enhance the function of providing feedback and reduce the incentives for drilling. Various proposals have been discussed at the meetings, such as providing systematic data only, modifying the existing reporting formats, providing parents with their children's individual assessment reports and providing more qualitative feedback in the reports.

Recommendations on administration and reporting of Primary 3 TSA

5.12 Upon in-depth and repeated discussions and having considered the views of various stakeholders, the Working Group reaffirms the intent and value of the establishment of TSA and recognises the functional use of TSA data to provide feedback to learning and teaching, which include:

- (i) At the school level, the use of related information can enhance the school-based curriculum and teaching practices for more effective student learning; and
- (ii) At the territory-wide level, the use of TSA data can facilitate EDB to identify priorities and directions for implementing measures to support learning.

The Committee takes the view that TSA shall continue to be carried out to retain the functions above.

5.13 A number of proposals concerning TSA administrative arrangements and reporting (such as conducting TSA in alternate years, conducting TSA on a sampling basis, and providing the territory-wide report or parent report only) have been put forward. A comparison of these is at *Annex II*, but none of the individual proposals is able to effectively address the issues identified in the recent discussions on TSA in the community¹². In other words, there is no single proposal or suggestion that could respond to and address various concerns in the community.

5.14 The Working Group on Administration takes the view that various factors should be thoroughly considered and holistic planning is required for the future development of TSA. To this end, a number of recommendations have been made. As a proposal for the short run, a study may be carried out in 2016. Schools will be invited to participate and the experience can become feedback for benefiting the development of TSA. Details of the study are set out in Chapter 6.

5.15 As for recommendations for the medium and long terms, the Working Group on Administration has put forward the views elaborated in detail in Chapter 6.

(2) The Working Group on Papers and Question Design (Working Group on Papers)

5.16 The Working Group on Papers (membership list at *Annex 12*) has held three meetings to conduct an in-depth review of the design of TSA papers and items, including item types, assessment coverage, length of papers and modes of assessment.

¹² For example, conducting TSA in alternate years would only mean alternate-year drills for schools with over-drilling practice, and this will affect learning and teaching at different class levels and hinder the tracking of student progress, while conducting TSA on a sampling basis would not alleviate pressure on schools as they are uncertain whether their students would be selected for assessment.

Principles for paper design for existing Primary 3 TSA

5.17 Currently, the items of Primary 3 TSA are developed in accordance with the basic competency documents for Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics prepared by the Curriculum Development Institute under EDB. Basic competencies are merely the basic requirements, not the full requirements, of the curriculum. Primary 3 basic competencies serve to determine whether a student meets the basic requirements of the curriculum (covering only part of the knowledge and skills) upon completion of the junior primary key learning stage (Primary 1 to Primary 3). The existing workflow for paper design and item setting, the paper arrangements and number of items for Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics, as well as the specific arrangements for sub-papers of Primary 3 TSA are set out in *Annex 13*.

Major views on paper and item design for Primary 3 TSA

5.18 In the course of the review, the Working Group on Papers gathered views of different stakeholders on the paper and item design for Primary 3 TSA through different channels, including HKEAA's focus groups, district parent-teacher associations, parent concern groups, children's rights forum, and district-based seminars for parents. The views are summarised below:

	<u>Chinese Language</u>	<u>English Language</u>	<u>Mathematics</u>
Item types	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Five-options-choose-two items and items requiring reverse thinking may create pressure on students - Diversified item types 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Options of multiple-choice items should be simple and clear - Items involving application of numeracy skills should be avoided 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complicated items call for in-depth teaching on the part of teachers - With item types in great variation, teaching schedule becomes tight
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fine to repeat item types, but they should be kept simple and straight-forward and should not be tricky 		
Assessment coverage/content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Since the texts in the reading paper is quite lengthy, the levels of difficulty may be adjusted in terms of wording; the excessive load of information in practical writing essays may be spread among other texts - For oral assessment, students should attempt only one item each time; or oral assessment should be scrapped - Is it necessary to conduct practical writing and audio-visual assessments every year? - For listening assessment, students should be allowed to read questions before the recording is played 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Each part of the reading paper should cover only one text type - Students' basic book concepts should not be assessed - Verbs and nouns related to the writing tasks may be provided to help students complete the tasks with the aid of pictures or mind-maps - Assessment time for the reading paper should be extended 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some assessment items are beyond the scope of Primary 3 curriculum - Students do not have relevant life experiences, e.g. flight journey, parking - Primary 3 curriculum only requires students to understand the basic features of a parallelogram and does not require them to draw the shape - Some items fail to convey statistical concepts properly

	- Assessment items should be put into context familiar to students and related to their life experiences		
Length of papers	- The number of items, as well as the number and length of texts should be reduced	- The number of items, as well as the number and length of texts, should be reduced	- The number of items should be reduced

5.19 At the first meeting, the Working Group on Papers identified directions and principles for the review of TSA papers and item design, which will guide the subsequent comprehensive review of the design and arrangements (including item types, assessment coverage, length of papers, modes of assessment and basic competencies) of each paper. The directions of the review are outlined below:

- (i) Modifications should serve to lessen students' burden of learning;
- (ii) The assessment design should align with the spirit of the curriculum;
- (iii) The reliability and validity of TSA should be maintained; and
- (iv) Items should reflect students' basic competencies.

5.20 The principles for modifications of paper and item design are as follows:

- (i) The learning needs of students should be taken into consideration;
- (ii) The best interests of students should always come first;
- (iii) Modifications should serve to lessen students' burden of learning;
- (iv) The assessment design should align with the spirit of the curriculum and the items should reflect the standards of basic competencies;
- (v) Items should relate to students' life experiences and tie in with their mental development;
- (vi) Items with overtones of race and class should be averted;
- (vii) The reliability and validity of TSA should be maintained, and items should reflect students' basic competencies; and
- (viii) Transparency should be enhanced.

Short-term recommendations on paper and item design for Primary 3 TSA

5.21 Upon discussions, the Working Group on Papers agrees that the revised assessments for Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics are already covered by the Primary 3 curriculum and thus extra drilling will not be necessary. The specific recommendations are set out as follows:

Primary 3 Chinese Language:

5.22 Reading assessment:

- (i) 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.
- (ii) Practical writing will only be included in one of the sub-papers to avoid giving undue weight to practical writing.
- (iii) The number of items will not exceed 20.

5.23 Writing assessment:

- (i) 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.

- (ii) Marking criteria: The marking criteria on the format of practical writing will be adjusted. Student exemplars demonstrating the attainment of basic competency will be provided.
- (iii) Answer sheet: The number of squares for writing will be reduced to 400.

5.24 Others:

- (i) 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.
- (ii) 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.

Primary 3 English Language:

5.25 Paper layout:

- (i) The paper layout will be improved. For example, a text will be placed alongside the questions as far as possible and the number of pages will be kept to a minimum to make it more convenient for students to write their answers.
- (ii) To help students manage the assessment time for the reading and writing papers, invigilators will announce the time twice during the examination, i.e. 15 minutes and 5 minutes before the end of examination.
- (iii) 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 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.
- (iv) Assessment items on basic book concepts should be avoided to minimise drilling.

Item design:

5.26 Reading:

- (i) The text types and context should be familiar to students.
- (ii) Options of multiple-choice items should be simple and straightforward.
- (iii) Students should not be required to apply their numeracy skills in the reading paper.

5.27 Writing:

- (i) 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 can use either the present tense or the past tense.
- (ii) For items on picture-aided storytelling, more hints can be given on the vocabulary relevant to each picture while allowing ample room for creativity.

Primary 3 Mathematics:

5.28 Modifications to content:

- (i) Only one basic competency will be assessed in each item.
- (ii) Distractors in multiple-choice items should align with basic competencies.
- (iii) Items requiring students to solve linking problems should be minimised. Without linked sub-questions, the marking criteria should be adjusted as appropriate.
- (iv) The number of items will be reduced, with an immediate cut of around 20%.
- (v) Each paper should have a variety of item types to avoid giving undue weight to a particular item type.
- (vi) The Moderation Group should put assessment items into context familiar to students. For example, items about exchanges between large-denomination banknotes and coins should be avoided.

5.29 Pre-tests may be considered to assess the effectiveness of the short-term modification proposals before their implementation in 2017.

5.30 Regarding medium and long-term directions, the Working Group on Papers has made recommendations listed in detail in Chapter 6.

Chapter 6 Recommendations

6.1 Having studied the reports submitted by the Working Group on Administration and Reporting and the Working Group on Papers and Question Design, the Committee puts forward a number of short, medium and long-term recommendations on basic competency assessment.

(1) Proposed directions

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

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

6.3 Upon thorough and detailed examination of the implementation and various arrangements of Primary 3 TSA, and consideration of views of different stakeholders, the Committee and the Working Groups have proposed the following general directions:

- (i) As mentioned in paragraph 5.12 of Chapter 5 above, the Committee reaffirms the intent and value of the establishment of TSA and recognises the functional use of TSA data to provide feedback to learning and teaching (which include: at the school level, the use of related information can enhance the school-based curriculum and teaching practices for more effective student learning; and at the territory-wide level, the use of TSA data can facilitate EDB to identify priorities and directions for implementing measures to support learning). The Committee takes the view that TSA shall continue to be carried out to retain the functions above.
- (ii) TSA has been implemented for years. The Government has initiated enhancement measures on certain arrangements of TSA in recent years. The Committee is aware of the concerns about TSA raised recently in part of the community (details in Chapter 4). As mentioned in paragraph 5.13 of Chapter 5 above, the Committee considers that modifications to administrative arrangements of TSA (e.g. conducting TSA in alternate years, conducting TSA on a sampling basis, and providing the territory-wide report or parent report only) are unable to effectively address the various concerns in the community.

To reduce over-drilling for TSA, and to reflect more clearly the intent of Basic Competency Assessment, the Committee takes the view that the assessment papers and question design could be adjusted. Besides this, the reports distributed to schools after the conduct of TSA could also adopt different formats to facilitate the enhancement of school-based curriculum and teaching practice while reflecting the low-stakes nature of TSA. The Committee takes the view that the adjusted

assessment papers and question design together with the different formats of reporting should be implemented as a Tryout arrangement in 2016, of which the positive outcomes would inform 2017 territory-wide implementation. The Tryout should be of a representative scale to ensure its validity.

(2) Short-term recommendations

6.4 In light of the proposed directions set out in paragraph 6.3, as well as the development directions and the way forward for Primary 3 TSA, the Committee recommends that the 2016 Tryout Study should be carried out with the following objectives:

- (i) to validate whether the revamped TSA papers and item design proposed by the relevant working group would maintain the reliability and validity of assessment while aligning with the requirements of basic competencies of Primary 3 students to tie in with the curriculum and student learning;
- (ii) to try out different reporting formats to meet the needs of individual school;
- (iii) to strengthen the provision of professional support measures for schools on homework policy, assessment literacy, enhancement of learning and teaching (e.g. through promotion of reading) as well as TSA during the Tryout, and to step up public education so as to enhance stakeholders' awareness of TSA as an element of "assessment for learning" with a view to enhancing quality education;
- (iv) to keep track of the attainment of basic competencies of all students in the territory in Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics and to provide continuous data for other related studies; and
- (v) to demonstrate in good faith that the low-stakes nature of TSA would not create pressure for school sponsoring bodies, schools and parents, and to foster mutual trust through participation, sharing and collaboration in promoting quality education for the purpose of effective and pleasurable student learning.

6.5 The specific arrangements for the 2016 Tryout Study are as follows:

- (i) School participation:
 - It is proposed that HKEAA should invite 50 primary schools of different types (about 10% of the primary schools in the territory with each participating as a unit) to participate in the Tryout. Other schools might participate on a voluntary basis.¹³
- (ii) Reporting formats:
 - It is proposed that schools should be given the options of receiving school reports in the existing format (providing correct response rates of each item and the average correct response rates in the territory), or

¹³ If an individual school declines invitation, the HKEAA will invite another school of the same type as replacement as this facilitates the study on the appropriateness of the papers. If there are numerous high achievers taking the assessment, the results may indicate items being easy. Therefore, participation of individual students on a voluntary basis is not recommended.

in the simplified format (reporting overall performance of students in each basic competency supplemented with sample items).

- The territory-wide report will be compiled on the basis mentioned in Item 6.5(i).

(iii) Collecting students' non-academic data:

- It is proposed that a questionnaire survey should be included to collect students' non-academic data (e.g. time spent on extra-curricular activities, learning interests, learning habits and other relevant data) so as to gain a better understanding of the factors affecting learning performance and to provide further assistance in learning.

(iv) Strengthening support measures:

- It is proposed that seminars and school-based support services should be arranged for schools participating in the Tryout Study and wider use of WLTS items should be promoted among schools and parents.

6.6 The outcome of the 2016 Tryout Study should be appropriately adopted and enhanced in the 2017 assessment arrangement, which includes the provision of professional support measures for schools. Related information can provide reference for the medium and long-term development of TSA and the promotion of quality education.

6.7 On paper and question design, major recommendations of the Committee include:

(i) Principles of modification:

- learning needs of students
- lessening the learning burden on students
- aligning with the spirit of curriculum
- adopting appropriate words and phrases in assessment materials

(ii) Primary 3 Chinese Language:

Reading assessment:

- 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.
- Practical writing will only be included in one of the sub-papers to avoid giving undue weight to practical writing.
- The number of items will not exceed 20.

Writing assessment:

- 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.
- Marking criteria: The marking criteria on the format of practical writing will be adjusted. Student exemplars demonstrating the attainment of basic competency will be provided.
- Answer sheet: The number of squares for writing will be reduced to 400.

Others:

- 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.
- 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.

(iii) Primary 3 English Language:

Paper layout:

- 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.
- 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.
- 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 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.
- Assessment items on basic book concepts should be avoided to minimise drilling.

Item design:

- Reading:
 - The text types and context should be familiar to students.
 - Options of multiple-choice items should be simple and straightforward.
 - Students should not be required to apply their numeracy skills in the reading paper.
- Writing:
 - 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.
 - For items on picture-aided storytelling, more hints can be given on the vocabulary relevant to each picture while allowing ample room for creativity. Hints should be given in various ways to avoid imitation and drilling.

(iv) Primary 3 Mathematics:

Modifications to content:

- Only one basic competency will be assessed in each item.
- Distractors in multiple-choice items should align with basic competencies.
- Items requiring students to solve linking problems should be minimised. Without linked sub-questions, the marking criteria should be adjusted as appropriate.
- The number of items will be reduced, with an immediate cut of around 20%.
- Each paper should have a variety of item types to avoid giving undue weight to a particular item type.
- 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.

6.8 To address various concerns in the community about TSA (including over-drilling, different stakeholders' perception of the stakes involved and the provision of support to schools and students), the Committee has made the following recommendations:

(i) Over-drilling

- 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;
- 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
- 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.

(ii) Stakeholders' perception of the stakes involved in TSA

- EDB to reassure the education sector of the low-stakes 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 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”.

(iii) Strengthening support for learning

- to organise seminars and workshops for different stakeholders in school;
- to encourage experience sharing among schools on the use of TSA data to enhance the curriculum and enrich teaching activities;
- 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
- 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 learning; and
- to provide effective support to schools.

(iv) Enhancing transparency and strengthening communication with parents

- 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.

(3) Medium and long-term recommendations

6.9 Regarding the medium and long-term directions for basic competency assessment, the Committee has made the following recommendations:

- (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 school-based curriculum and learning activities; as well as strengthening the communication and collaboration among various sectors, such as:
- 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;
 - 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;
 - 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;
 - 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;
 - for parents: promoting among them the understanding of the concept of assessment for learning, strengthening home-school co-operation and communication for better understanding of their children's learning needs;
 - for HKEAA officers: promoting assessment for learning through enhancing assessment items and reports;
- (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;
 - (iii) to expand the existing central online assessment bank "Student Assessment" to cater for everyday learning and teaching as well as assessment;
 - (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;
 - (v) to review the arrangements of basic competency assessment for students with special educational needs and non-Chinese speaking students;
 - (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
 - (vii) to review the above recommendations on an on-going basis for improvement.

**Terms of Reference
for the Coordinating Committee on
Basic Competency Assessment and Assessment Literacy**

Below are the terms of reference for the Coordinating Committee on Basic Competency Assessment and Assessment Literacy:

- To advise the Government on the overall direction on the promotion of assessment literacy in the school sector, in particular through the Basic Competency Assessment and Student Assessment Repository Projects;
- To advise the Government on the direction on the use of quantitative and qualitative data collected across the years to enhance learning and teaching; and
- To advise the Government on the use of Information Communications Technology in promoting “Assessment for Learning” and “Assessment as Learning”, including the planning and administration of the Student Assessment Repository, such as the overall direction, the feedback and reporting function, quality assurance mechanism as well as support to schools.

Implementation of the Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA)

- In 2001, the Education Bureau (EDB) commissioned the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) to develop and implement TSA. TSA was introduced to Primary 3 in 2004, Primary 6 in 2005 and Secondary 3 in 2006 respectively. From 2006 onward, all students at Primary 3, Primary 6 and Secondary 3 take part in TSA annually (except that Primary 6 TSA was suspended in 2012 and 2014).
- The main purposes of TSA are:
 - (i) to provide the Government and school management with information on students' standards in key learning areas for purposes of school improvement and to provide more focused support to schools;
 - (ii) to provide teachers with positive feedback to enhance the effectiveness of learning and teaching; and
 - (iii) to enhance assessment literacy and promote the cultures of assessment for learning in schools, especially in basic education stage (Primary 1 to Secondary 3).
- The design of this standards-referenced assessment of student performance is based on the Basic Competency Descriptors at the end of each key learning stage and the Curriculum Guide prepared by the Curriculum Development Council. The Basic Competency (BC) represents just part of the curriculum requirements. After the first year's administration of TSA at each level (i.e. Primary 3 in 2004, Primary 6 in 2005 and Secondary 3 in 2006), panels of judges were formed to set the basic competency standards for the three subjects using two well-known psychometric methodologies (Angoff method and Bookmark Method). The BC standards set remained unchanged across the years. To maintain the standards set, before the conduct of each year's TSA a research test is used to link and equate performance of a sampling of students shortly.
- The TSA items are endorsed by the Moderation Committees. The Committee is composed of academics from tertiary institutions, serving teachers as well as officers from EDB and HKEAA. Meetings are conducted regularly to ensure item quality and consistency in item difficulty level.
- The assessments are conducted on designated dates and in the pencil and paper mode, except for the oral assessments of Chinese Language and English Language which are conducted by sampling methods. Each student is required to attempt only one sub-paper of each subject.

- On the day of release of TSA results, a TSA report (including territory-wide data and students' performance exemplars), all question papers and marking schemes are uploaded to the HKEAA Basic Competency Assessment website for public viewing. Schools can gather information from the website (particularly the territory-wide students' performance in different areas) and download their individual school reports, via a password preset for each school, for analyzing and evaluating the learning and teaching strategies.
- The individual school level report provides a school's overall attainment rates on the CEM subjects (for some schools which are not provided with BC attainment rates since 2014), and also a question item analysis, and other supplementary data (serves the feedback purpose of TSA). No individual students' results are provided in the TSA school reports. The TSA results do not affect the appeal of schools for Primary One Admission. Neither does it affect Secondary School Place Allocation.
- Every year around November to December, the HKEAA will hold a series of seminars to help teachers interpret the TSA data and enhance their understanding about students' strengths and weaknesses.

**Membership list of the Coordinating Committee on Basic Competency
Assessment and Assessment Literacy**

Chairperson

Deputy Secretary for Education

Ex-officio Members

Principal Assistant Secretary (Education Infrastructure), Education Bureau

Principal Assistant Secretary (Curriculum Development)/ Principal Education Officer
(Curriculum Development), Education Bureau

Secretary General of the Hong Kong Examination and Assessment Authority *

Executive Director of the Hong Kong Education City Limited

Members

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Dr CHAN So-yee, Zoe Curriculum Leader, L.K.W.F.S.L. Wong Yiu Nam
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Dr CHONG Siu-man,
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Professor HAU Kit-tai Choh-Ming Li Professor, The Chinese University of
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Ms Martina KAN Chinese Panel Head, St. Francis' Canossian School

Mr LAI Tsz-man *

Principal, Kwok Man School

Dr Winnie LAI Part-time Lecturer, Faculty of Education, The University

of Hong Kong

- Ms LAM Sau-lan, Anna Vice Panel Head of English Department, Caritas Chong Yuet Ming Secondary School
- Mr LAM Yat-fung, James * Principal, Lions College
- Ms LEE Suet-ying * Principal, Ho Yu College and Primary School (Sponsored by Sik Sik Yuen)
- Mr LEUNG Wai-cheong Vice-Principal, St. Anthony's School
- Professor MOK Mo-ching, Magdalena Chair Professor, The Hong Kong Institute of Education
- Ms SIN Yuk-chun, Rosita Chinese Panel Head, Stewards Ma Kam Ming Charitable Foundation Ma Ko Pan Memorial College
- Mr TONG Sau-chai, Henry * Chairman, Committee on Home-School Cooperation

* Joining the Committee in October 2015

List of groups and organisations met

I. Consultation sessions or seminars:

	Activity	Date	Summary
1.	Association of School Heads of Government Primary Schools	6 November 2015	Annex 5(a)
2.	Meeting with representatives of Federations of Parent-Teacher Associations of 18 districts	11 November 2015	Annex 5(b)
3.	Meeting with representatives of Federations of Parent-Teacher Associations of 18 districts	12 November 2015	Annex 5(c)
4.	Focus group meeting for teachers held by HKEAA (Primary 3 Chinese Language)	18 November 2015	Annex 5(d)
5.	Focus group meeting for teachers held by HKEAA (Primary 3 English Language)	18 November 2015	Annex 5(d)
6.	Focus group meeting for teachers held by HKEAA (Primary 3 Mathematics)	20 November 2015	Annex 5(d)
7.	Parents' Seminar	27 November 2015	Annex 5(e)
8.	Focus group meeting of Home-School Co-operation Committee	1 December 2015	Annex 5(f)
9.	Focus group meeting for teachers held by HKEAA (Primary 6 Mathematics)	8 December 2015	Annex 5(g)

10.	Focus group meeting for teachers held by HKEAA (Primary 6 Chinese Language)	9 December 2015	Annex 5(g)
11.	Focus group meeting for teachers held by HKEAA (Primary 6 English Language)	10 December 2015	Annex 5(g)
12.	District-based Seminars for Parents — Wong Tai Sin, Kwun Tong, Sai Kung	16 December 2015	Annex 5(h)
13.	District-based Seminar for Parents — Sha Tin District, Tai Po District, North District	17 December 2015	Annex 5(i)
14.	District-based Seminar for Parents — Central and Western District, Eastern District, Southern District, Wan Chai District, Islands District	7 January 2016	Annex 5(j)
15.	District-based Seminar for Parents — Kwai Tsing District, Tsuen Wan District, Tuen Mun District, Yuen Long District	8 January 2016	Annex 5(k)
16.	District-based Seminar for Parents — Kowloon City District, Sham Shui Po District, Yau Tsim Mong District	11 January 2016	Annex 5(l)
17.	District-based Seminars for Parents	19 January 2016	Annex 5(m)
18. *	TSA Concern Group	27 January 2016	Annex 5(n)
19. *	Federation of Parent-Teacher Associations of 18 Districts	1 February 2016	Annex 5(o)
20. *	Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union	2 February 2016	Annex 5(p)

II. Sessions on introducing TSA (by invitation):

	Activity	Date
1.	Special meeting, Panel on Education, Legislative Council	29 November 2015
2.	Children's Rights Forum	3 December 2015
3.	Meeting, Panel on Education, Legislative Council	11 January 2016

Views of stakeholders

Annex 5(a)

Association of School Heads of Government Primary Schools

Date: 6 November 2015 (Friday)
Time: 5:45 pm
Venue: E304, East Block, Kowloon Tong Education Services Centre
Organiser: Education Bureau

Summary

Main objectives of the meeting:

The objective is to pay heed to and understand views and suggestions from colleagues working in government schools regarding public concerns about the Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA).

Major views of the participants:

1. The participants acknowledged the directions spelt out in the Curriculum Reforms in 2000 and understood that TSA is not an examination but a low-stakes assessment. Assessment information helps schools make self-improvement and early identify students' strengths and weaknesses for follow-up action.
2. Some colleagues opined that there should be a yardstick to enable schools to realise their standards against the territory-wide levels in order to provide feedback for curriculum planning.
3. Some colleagues pointed out that the focus should be the follow-up work after assessment rather than the nominal data.
4. Some colleagues remarked that some parents support and acknowledge TSA while some parents oppose to it mainly because of over-drilling. Some parents considered the questions tricky and the passages too long.
5. Some colleagues pointed out that some parents do not have much knowledge about TSA and the information they obtained is solely from the media and the Internet. Without a whole picture, parents easily misunderstand the purpose and implementation of TSA. Some colleagues suggested that EDB should step up publicity on the purpose and design of TSA.
6. Some colleagues stressed the importance of home-school cooperation, and shared on the spot their school-based experiences in helping parents understand how the school used TSA data to improve teaching and enhance learning through parents' meetings. Some colleagues also shared their experiences of strengthening

communication between schools and parents by issuing informal letters.

7. Some colleagues pointed out that the so-called “TSA supplementary exercises” available in the market do not necessarily target at basic competency requirements.
8. Some colleagues considered that schools will purchase supplementary exercises that are suitable for their students for remediation and enhancement purposes according to their school contexts and professional judgement.

Response from EDB:

1. The EDB reiterated that TSA is a low-stakes assessment, and that assessment information helps schools set long-term targets and enhance learning and teaching.
2. The EDB acknowledged the importance of home-school cooperation, suggested making use of the Parent-Teacher Association meetings to discuss policies on school assessment and homework and explained to parents how the schools use TSA information to improve teaching in order to promote effective learning.
3. Practices have an important role to play in the learning process. EDB trusts that schools will exercise professional judgement and understand that over-drilling does not facilitate students to learn.
4. The EDB will collect views from different stakeholders on TSA in the future for conducting a thorough review.
5. The EDB will strengthen teachers’ training and public education to promote assessment literacy.

**Meeting with representatives of Federations of
Parent-Teacher Associations of 18 districts**

Date: 11 November 2015 (Wednesday)
Time: 7:00 – 8:30 pm
Venue: EP12, Podium, East Block, Kowloon Tong Education Services
Centre
Organiser: Education Bureau

Summary

Use of Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA) data:

1. There is no need to inform schools of the TSA results. However, some representatives opined that schools will not be able to know how students should make improvements if the results are not made available.
2. There are two kinds of school response to TSA results: drilling and improvement. The former is more common as it requires fewer changes and is easier to implement.

Tricky questions, excessive items and lengthy texts:

1. The TSA items were easier at the initial stage. The questions have become more difficult and tricky since 2013. The levels of difficulty of the existing TSA have exceeded that of basic competencies.
2. It is believed that the experts of the Hong Kong Examinations Assessment Authority design appropriate items based on studies. They have to explain why TSA items have become more difficult in recent years.
3. It is believed that not all TSA items are tricky, but most of the supplementary exercises in the market are very tricky.
4. In some schools, some questions of Mathematics are not conventional, and teachers explain to students that they do not expect all students to be able to answer them.
5. The son of a representative said that the items of Primary 3 TSA were difficult but those of Primary 6 were easy.
6. The Education Bureau (EDB) should review the levels of difficulty of the items.

Homework and drilling:

1. There is a general view among representatives that TSA is not a problem in itself and it does not affect the advancement of their children's studies. Yet, drillings at schools have exerted pressure on parents.

2. The release of TSA results to schools has brought pressure on schools, defeating the original purpose of TSA and giving rise to drilling. The bandwagon effect is seen in some schools where drilling is adopted out of fear of affecting student intake.
3. It is possible that teachers heavily focus on the more difficult items and find it necessary to drill their students.
4. The EDB should provide clear guidelines for schools to minimise drilling.
5. Students need drilling to tackle tricky questions.
6. It seems that TSA, not covered in everyday learning, is a new subject merely for the purpose of test-taking.
7. Some schools arrange drills on Saturdays or during recess time.
8. TSA has been implemented for 11 years, and it has now become a test of teachers' effectiveness in administering drills.
9. Some parents make a comparison among schools, thinking that schools that do not conduct drilling practices are not good enough.
10. Primary 3 students usually take a few hours to finish their heavy homework. TSA supplementary exercises, which are a part of homework, render the homework load much heavier. While some parents are dissatisfied with the homework load for their children, they have not expressed their views to schools because they fear that their children will be labelled by the schools.

Opposing to the retention of TSA:

1. TSA is a kind of public examination, and Primary 3 students should not take a public examination.

Recommendations:

1. The fact that private schools do not participate in TSA is an issue. Their participation is necessary for data collection to provide information about the levels of schools in the territory.
2. Schools should be allowed to participate in TSA on a voluntary basis.

Other views:

1. The son of a representative felt the pressure of TSA at Primary 1, so she consulted the head of the kindergarten her son attended before. The school head explained to her that TSA would not affect advancement in school. There was not much drilling in school at that time. Homework practice designed in accordance with TSA item types was straightforward and easy to handle.

Response from EDB:

1. The TSA results help set long-term targets for promoting learning and teaching. For parents who want to have a better understanding of TSA, the EDB officers

are very delighted to give a briefing.

2. Representatives discussed the transparency of TSA results. EDB made it clear that TSA results would not be publicised. Schools only know the overall performance of their own students.
3. Some TSA items may be rather difficult. Students may not be able to answer them but it does not mean that they do not meet the standards or acquire basic competencies.
4. The EDB will review the levels of difficulty of TSA items in consultation with the committees concerned.
5. The EDB has given suggestions to schools on homework load and the time required for finishing homework. Schools will make arrangements according to their own curriculum. It is hoped that communication between schools and parents can be strengthened on the homework issue.
6. Primary 3 is an important key learning stage. If Primary 3 students are unable to attain basic competencies, timely remediation and follow-up action can be taken when they are at Primary 4. TSA has its value.
7. Private schools are allowed to undertake TSA on a voluntary basis because they have their own curriculum, which might not align with TSA. In fact, quite a number of private schools acknowledge TSA by taking part in it.

**Meeting with representatives of Federations of Parent-Teacher Associations
of 18 districts**

Date: 12 November 2015 (Thursday)
Time: 7:00 – 8:30 pm
Venue: EP12, Podium, East Block, Kowloon Tong Education Services
Centre
Organiser: Education Bureau

Summary

Use of Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA) data:

1. Some schools clearly state that TSA is an ordinary assessment, and students only need to try their best to take it.

Tricky questions, excessive items and lengthy texts:

1. TSA items are much more difficult than what is required of basic competencies.

Drilling:

1. Currently there are two scenarios: some parents prefer drilling because they want their children to be top of the class; and some schools feel the pressure from TSA and hence exert pressure on teachers who in turn put pressure on students.
2. Drilling for TSA is the problem of individual schools.
3. Schools tend to drill their students for TSA if their students' performance is comparatively undesirable. Some students may spend the whole night doing homework every day but what they are doing are not TSA supplementary exercises.
4. Individual schools let parents have the option of not buying and doing TSA supplementary exercises.
5. In some schools, students only do TSA supplementary exercises in class periods. They do not need to do such exercises at home.
6. Parents should not let their children drill for TSA, and should let them understand that TSA is just a diagnostic process.

Publicity of TSA:

1. There was no drilling for TSA at the initial stage, but subsequently parents started drilling. Schools should be made aware that TSA has no labelling effect.

2. There is a suggestion that EDB may publicise TSA to schools by sending officers of the School Development Section to schools to give a briefing to parents on TSA.
3. There is a suggestion that the Government may issue an open letter to all people in Hong Kong to make it compulsory for schools to sign a charter that there will be no drilling for TSA.

Retention of TSA:

1. There are objections against the immediate abolition of TSA. What should be solved is the issue of drilling, and enhancement should be made to TSA.
2. Assessment systems are in place in other countries, so Hong Kong should not abolish its assessment systems.
3. Even if TSA is abolished and a new system is set up, that system may bring about other problems. It is better to tackle the existing problems and overcome the inadequacies.

Other views:

1. It cannot help solve the problem if schools are allowed to participate in TSA on a voluntary basis because some parents consider that schools may lose competitiveness without undertaking TSA. Besides, school participation on a voluntary basis may make the data unreliable.

Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority
Summary Report of Views from Focus Group Meetings
(Primary 3 Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics)
Review on Territory-wide System Assessment

Background

In response to the recent concerns about Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA) from the public and various stakeholders, the Education Bureau (EDB) has requested the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) to collect views from teachers with the relevant subject expertise. To this end, the HKEAA will organise a series of Focus Group (FG) meetings for teachers with a range of teaching experience at Primary 3 level of the relevant subjects. In order to have a comprehensive review of opinions on the TSA, the Education Assessment Services Division (EASD) of the HKEAA has invited a group of teachers to attend the meetings in mid/late November 2015. Many of them have never been involved in moderation and marking of the TSA. Their opinions were summarized in this report and have been forwarded to the Education Bureau (EDB) as feedback towards setting the future direction of the TSA.

Target Groups

A total of 33 representatives from more than 30 primary schools and across three subjects (Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics) attended the meetings. The school representatives included a school head, panel chairpersons, subject teachers and PSMCD. The schools involved had a variety of sponsoring body types. The following table shows the number of school representatives as per primary subject level.

Subject \ Number	Number of Representatives per Subject at Primary 3 Level
Chinese Language	11
English Language	10
Mathematics	12
Total	33

Mode of Meetings

A total of 3 FG meetings were held and each meeting consisted of 2 to 3 hours of semi-structured questions and responses.

Meeting Focus

The main purpose of the meetings was to collect views from teachers with relevant subject expertise at Primary 3 level. 2014 TSA Primary 3 question papers (with percentage correct of each item) and the marking schemes were tabled for teachers' reference.

The emphasis of each meeting was as follows:

- Item difficulty
- No. of items assessed
- Passage length (for language subjects)
- Reading and listening tasks (for language subjects)
- Range of texts and diversity of question types in reading and speaking (for language subjects)
- Extension of assessment duration (for Primary 3 English Language only)
- Issues of 'overly tricky questions'
- Removal of BC attainment rates
- Extra/Remedial lessons for preparation of Primary 3 TSA
- Suitability of TSA supplementary exercises
- Views on mode of TSA and its arrangement

Overview

An overview of the three FG meetings where major issues were discussed and views from the school representatives were summarised as follows:

1. Primary 3 Chinese Language

1.1 Primary 3 Chinese Reading Assessment

- i. Items were suitable for Primary 3 students in terms of item difficulty, length of passage, coverage of topic and assessment time. The total number of items in each sub-paper was also suitable. However, one teacher claimed that a few of her students were unable to complete the reading paper.
- ii. The coverage of topics in Primary 3 Chinese reading is sufficient. These topics are relevant to the curriculum guide and suitable for students' ability. It was held that practical writing genres (實用文) include a variety of text-types, e.g. posters, web pages, suitable for extending students' exposure. The passage lengths were found to be getting more appropriate to the target level over the last three years. A number of teachers mentioned that the information given in practical writing texts was very dense and they suggested adjusting the reading load.
- iii. Teachers found that the item types were suitable for Primary 3 level. The items were all at BC level but could still allow the assessment to distinguish between student ability levels and they could also be used for teachers' reference in item development. Some teachers commented that schools should be notified in advance if there were new item types included. However, a few teachers found advance notice unnecessary since the items are assessing students' BC and expressed concerns that advance notice may encourage 'drilling'. The teachers noted that adjustments had been made in response to teachers' earlier concerns about assessment design, e.g. students were given the specified paragraph(s) to focus on when searching the relevant 'vocabulary

items’.

1.2 Primary 3 Chinese Audio-visual (CAV) Assessment

The group noted that the video clips were interesting and students were motivated in taking the CAV, especially SEN students. The CAV was relevant to students’ everyday life and the latest trends.

1.3 Primary 3 Chinese Writing

The group noted that the items allowed students to show their competence in practical writing. However, only a minority of students were able to provide substantial content with well-structured organization.

2. Primary 3 English Language

2.1 Primary 3 English Listening Items

- i. The items were considered suitable for Primary 3 students in terms of item difficulty, length of listening task, question type (i.e. multiple choice), authenticity of the task, and assessment time (i.e. about 20 minutes). The total number of items (19-20) in each sub-paper was also considered suitable.
- ii. The artwork in the tasks was found to be clear and the size of the pictures suitable.
- iii. Referring to the concern of having too many pages in the listening papers, the teachers did not see this as a problem for students. They found the total number of pages (12-16 pages in each listening sub-paper) was fine for students. When asked if it would be appropriate to reduce the size of the pictures slightly in order to reduce the total number of pages in each sub-paper, the teachers responded that the size of the pictures should remain unchanged for future TSA papers. They suggested putting more items (without pictures) on a single page instead.
- iv. ‘Overly tricky questions’ were not a concern to the teachers. They knew

that the options were designed to assess students' listening ability and identify students' listening problems.

- v. The duration of music for the sound test and preparation of students to answer the questions were found suitable but one teacher opined that the 8-second pause given to students for completion of each item might not be enough.

2.2 Primary 3 English Reading items

- i. The group found the items suitable for Primary 3 students in terms of item difficulty, length of reading text (both for short tasks and long tasks), text-type and the topic coverage.
- ii. The artwork in the tasks was found to be of good quality and very clear to students. The size of the pictures was suitable and should remain unchanged for future TSA papers.
- iii. Regarding the extension of assessment time (total of 30 minutes), teachers still thought there was not enough time for students to complete the four reading tasks and one writing task. They further commented that there were 25 reading items in each of the TSA 2014 Reading & Writing sub-papers. They thought there were too many items for Primary 3 students to do within the assessment time.
- iv. Suggestions on how to improve the situation were given by teachers:
 - Increase the assessment time of each Reading & Writing sub-paper with reference to the existing practice at school (reading assessment: 50 minutes).
 - Reduce the number of parts in each Reading & Writing sub-paper from four to three. In order to compensate for the reduction of total number of items in each sub-paper, it was suggested that the number of items in each part should be slightly increased.
 - Separate each Reading & Writing sub-paper into 2 papers: 1 Reading paper (30 minutes) and 1 Writing paper (15 minutes). During implementation of the assessment, a short break of 5 minutes should

be given to students after the completion of the Reading paper.

2.3 Response to recent concerns about the Primary 3 reading items

- i. In response to the criticisms on the use of past tense in reading texts, the teachers commented that the use of past tense was acceptable because the Primary 3 students should have already learnt past tense when they were near the end of Key Stage 1. However, some teachers said that it should be noted that some students might not be familiar with irregular verbs. The teachers also said the use of passive voice in the poster was appropriate in terms of authenticity of the reading text.
- ii. When asked if there were too many pages in the reading papers, the teachers did not see this as a problem. However, they suggested reducing the total number of pages as far as possible.
- iii. The teachers did not think the concern about 'overly tricky questions' was valid for the Primary 3 reading items. They knew that the options were designed to test students' reading ability and so identify their reading problems.
- iv. In response to the comment that some TSA Primary 3 Reading items might be testing students' mathematics ability, most of the teachers did not share this concern. Only one teacher referred to one item which asked about the duration of a talk that might involve some mathematical concepts.
- v. In response to the concern of having extra/remedial lessons at school, the teachers commented that since there was a wide variety of text-types to be assessed in TSA and the assessment time for the Reading & Writing papers was only 30 minutes, they had to train students to attempt questions from different text-types and to manage time.

2.4 Primary 3 English Writing Items

- i. The teachers agreed that the suggested time (about 15 minutes) allotted for the completion of writing task was appropriate.
- ii. The word prompts and the pictorial cues given for story writing were

sufficient to allow students to complete the writing task.

- iii. The artwork in the writing task was very clear to the students and putting the pictures for the writing task side by side with the page of lines for writing was appropriate.
- iv. Referring to the writing task with a mind map, one teacher commented that the question prompts provided were not sufficient to help students complete the task. Word prompts should also be provided.

2.5 Primary 3 English Speaking items

- i. The teachers agreed that the items on Speaking were found suitable in terms of level of difficulty.
- ii. The teachers commented that the pictures for 'Picture Description' given to the students were clear.
- iii. The group also commented the question prompts provided to the Oral Examiners were clear and easy to follow.

3. Primary 3 Mathematics

- i. TSA 2014 M1-Q12: A teacher said that the textbooks did not cover the BC topic on 'Solving problems involving division in the calculation of money'. The reason was that some textbooks put this topic in Primary 4 whereas it should be taught in Primary 3 according to the curriculum/BC documents.
- ii. TSA 2014 M2-Q28(b): The group noted that this question required students to read a weighing scale which should have been taught in Primary 2. They noted some Primary 3 students had forgotten the skills of reading different types of weighing scales.
- iii. TSA 2014 M3-Q27: The group noted that students did not have the experience of weighing an air-conditioner in daily life.
- iv. TSA 2014 M1-Q22(b): Students were weak in monetary exchange, but they might do better if coins were given in real-life situations.

4. Removal of BC Attainment Rates

- i. Teachers in Chinese and English FG opined that the source of pressure was not from the TSA papers but from the way the data interpreted. Since the BC attainment was not given for individual schools, principals/school board directors scrutinise the percentage correct (even a 0.1% lower than the territory-wide data) for each individual item instead. The school heads would then ask the teachers to do follow-up actions. A few teachers raised the point that some schools asked for 100% correct for each item. Some pointed out schools under the same sponsoring body were compared. As a result, the pressures of TSA were still felt by teachers and school heads even after the school-wise percentage of students achieving Basic Competency had been deleted from the primary school's TSA reports.
- ii. Some teacher participants from Chinese and Mathematics FG stated that their schools estimated the school percentage of students achieving Basic Competency using the item facilities provided in the TSA reports. (The HKEAA staff immediately responded that this was not a reliable method because the sampling error of different students doing different sub-papers need to be considered.)
- iii. Some teachers agreed that the TSA provided objective data. The percentage correct listed in the item analysis reports showed that the items were not difficult. The pressure felt various school stakeholders were due to the attitudes of the school's top management and its sponsoring body towards the use of TSA data. If they used the data as a means to inform learning and teaching, there would be no pressure felt by relevant stakeholders.
- iv. A Mathematics teacher revealed that once the subject teachers of his school were requested to attend training workshops on teaching by EDB because the TSA result of his school was lower than in previous years.

5. Extra/Remedial Lessons for the Preparation of Primary 3 TSA

- i. The English teacher participants did not ask students to attend extra/remedial lessons for the preparation of Primary 3 TSA. However, they admitted that they did ask the students to do supplementary exercises and past TSA papers in order to get students familiarised with the reading text-types and train them on time management of the assessment.
- ii. The Mathematics teacher participants said that their schools had arranged extra lessons for TSA and extra time was required to do revision on Primary 1 and Primary 2 Mathematics topics.
- iii. A Mathematics teacher thought that remedial lessons for preparing Primary 3 Mathematics were unnecessary. However, her school head and parents considered that it may not have been fair if remedial lessons were only arranged for Chinese and English.

6. Suitability of TSA Supplementary Exercises

- i. The English teachers observed that the TSA supplementary exercises available in the marketplace were more difficult than the TSA papers, especially the listening tasks. The speed of the voice-overs was very high. This made it difficult for students to follow.
- ii. The supplementary exercises related to TSA were also assigned by some teacher participants.

7. Views on Mode of TSA and its Arrangements

- i. Teachers in the Chinese FG disagreed abolishing the Primary 3 TSA. They found that the TSA could inform learning and teaching. The TSA enabled teachers to have a good grasp of their students' Basic Competency levels and thus provide support to students accordingly.
- ii. Teachers had different views on the TSA arrangements:
 - Some teachers in the Chinese, English and Mathematics FG thought that TSA should be conducted every year as it was a uniform test in the territory. The data provided was useful for teachers as feedback on

learning and teaching. It also brought benefits for students' learning in a long run.

- Some teachers preferred to have TSA conducted in alternate years (i.e. Primary 6 TSA alternate-year opt-in mode) so as to release pressure from teachers and students. However, most teachers in Chinese and English FG disagreed with this mode since a cohort study cannot be provided for the same group of students taking both Primary 3 and Primary 6 TSA.
- iii. Teachers in Chinese and English FG did not agree that implementation of TSA by sampling would help release pressure at all. Moreover, the data given from sampling could not fully reflect the students' actual abilities.
- iv. Teachers said they would still ask students to do extra supplementary exercises or attend remedial lessons as long as TSA was in place. Changes to the mode of implementation (e.g. opt-in, sampling) would not stop schools from 'drilling' the students.
- v. One teacher opined that 'drilling' of students was common in schools because they did not know the meaning of 'Achieving Basic Competency' and 'Not Achieving Basic Competency' was not clearly understood by those responsible. Such personnel could not understand how they could 'achieve basic competency'. Therefore they would 'drill' the students as much as they could in the hope of achieving BC. It was suggested that there should be more communication between schools, EDB and HKEAA.

8. Others

8.1 Use of TSA Data

A number of students stated that TSA data could inform learning and teaching. Teachers were able to identify students' strengths and weaknesses and so make adjustments, do follow-ups and enhancements in their teaching.

8.2 School-based Support by EDB

Mathematics teachers opined that school-based support by EDB was very important but inadequate. They would like to know if EDB could share the teaching tools among schools.

9. Recommendations

9.1 Online Mode of Assessment

A number of teachers asked if TSA could be conducted online. The online mode reduced the act of writing, which favoured some SEN students and enabled instant provision of data so that teachers could do timely remedial measures.

9.2 Communication with the School Management Boards and Parents

The school management boards and parents should be clearly informed of the purpose and values of TSA and improving student performances is a long-term process. TSA is not for comparing schools and schools need not blindly target 100% correct for individual items. TSA is not a testing system which can be 'beaten' by drilling and that over-drilling is counter-productive since it detracts from real skill development which is the main factor in TSA performance. TSA is one of many similar quality assurance programmes throughout the world to monitor student learning process and nurture students by unleashing their potential.

Education Assessment Services Division

Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority

25 November 2015

Parents' Seminar

Date: 27 November 2015 (Friday)
Time: 6:30 - 8:30 pm
Venue: EP12, Podium, East Block, Kowloon Tong Education Services Centre
Organiser: Education Bureau

Summary

Use of Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA) data:

1. Many schools are worried that TSA results will bring serious consequences.

Tricky questions, excessive items, and lengthy texts:

1. TSA items are deviating from basic competencies.
2. As seen from the TSA items of Chinese papers in the PowerPoint, it seems that the questions are too difficult for Primary 3 students.

Drilling:

1. TSA gives rise to drilling.
2. TSA reflects teachers' efficiency in teaching. Teachers or schools may push students into drilling for higher marks.

Publicity of TSA:

1. Talks should be conducted in primary schools to directly deliver the messages to school principals and parents.

Opposing to the retention of TSA:

1. Even without TSA, schools are still able to find out the standards of their students' performance.

Other views:

1. Some schools use textbooks which are highly TSA-oriented.
2. Some participants enquired whether a review of Secondary 3 TSA would be conducted and how Secondary 3 TSA could benefit Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination (HKDSE).

Speakers' response:

1. From 2014 onwards, schools are no longer provided with the attainment rates of TSA, and they only have the correct response rates of each item.
2. TSA results are not used to rank or close schools.
3. TSA serves the purpose of providing feedback to learning and teaching. Results of individual students are not made available.
4. Basic competencies have been developed further for over ten years. Those who developed basic competencies may not have involved in setting TSA items anymore. Nevertheless, there is room for a review of the item difficulty.
5. The Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority might have set a small number of questions which are more difficult for the purpose of catering for learner diversity. The overall levels of difficulty of the papers will be reviewed by the committees concerned.
6. What we should review is the culture of drilling instead of TSA.
7. Students should have acquired basic competencies of TSA through daily learning and teaching activities. Students should not focus their efforts on drilling for basic competencies at the cost of neglecting other aspects of knowledge and the nurturing of positive learning attitudes. As for schools, they should put more emphasis on subject knowledge instead of drilling TSA items.
8. The Education Bureau is always willing to give a briefing on TSA to stakeholders through different channels, such as talks and videos.
9. Another way to organise talks is that, the district-based Parent-Teacher Associations Federation may take the initiative to invite primary school principals and parents to attend those talks.
10. Not all primary schools possess the professional knowledge of reviewing the school performance. TSA enables schools to understand their standards against the territory-wide levels.
11. Textbooks are not designed merely for TSA.
12. Secondary schools do not have many comments on TSA because their focus is on HKDSE. In general, secondary schools are able to make use of the TSA data to provide feedback to learning and teaching. As the scope of Secondary 3 TSA forms part of the scope of HKDSE, Secondary 3 TSA is useful for HKDSE.

Focus group meeting of Home-School Co-operation Committee

Date: 1 December 2015 (Tuesday)
Time: 6:30 - 8:50 pm
Venue: EP12, Podium, East Block, Kowloon Tong Education Services Centre
Organiser: Education Bureau

Summary

Use of Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA) data:

1. If quantitative assessment is not supported with non-quantitative assessment for a balance, there are likely problems. TSA is a quantitative assessment. Enquiry is made about whether there is any non-quantitative assessment to strike a balance in assessment.
2. There should be a baseline for fair comparison. Comparison among local schools is made in TSA but the Primary 1 admission situation has not been counted and thus there is no baseline. The comparison is meaningless.
3. For secondary school principals, Secondary 3 TSA is useful because secondary schools can obtain assessment data for information about student performance for the purpose of following up and planning improvement.
4. It is unreasonable not to be able to know about the standards of students or the territory-wide standards at the end of the 6-year primary school curriculum.

Administrative arrangements:

1. Allowing schools to make their own decisions on administrative arrangements can leave the impression that the Government is shoving off responsibility to schools. Schools will also be under pressure having to take views of parents into consideration.
2. TSA is conducted in May and June every year. Lesson time is in a way reduced and schools need to speed up to complete the curriculum thus affecting the quality of teaching. TSA should be conducted in July.
3. TSA reports are not available until December every year. It affects the use and impact of assessment data to facilitate assessment for learning.

Tricky questions, excessive items and lengthy texts:

1. The assessment content of Primary 3 TSA is the same as that of Primary 3 curriculum but the logical thinking required of the assessment items is that of Primary 5.

2. The level of difficulty of the assessment items has been increasing. The quality control of the moderation process is questionable.

Drilling:

1. Drilling comes as a result of people's misunderstanding of TSA and the situation is aggravated by tutoring centres and publishers.
2. Schools' selective implementation of the Education Bureau (EDB) policies leads to the problem of drilling.
3. Children of some participants in the meeting are at Primary 3. The children had TSA related practice in Primary 1 and Primary 2. However, the children and their friends do not consider the practice additional and beyond the curriculum.
4. Study can be conducted to find out whether the drilling issue comes as a result of TSA or it is merely a problem of excessive homework.

More demanding school-based assessment and curriculum:

1. Practical writing used to be assigned three times per year. It is now assigned ten times per year.

Support for students and schools:

1. Positive reinforcement of incentives is necessary. For example, schools with unsatisfactory TSA performance can be provided with additional support.

Publicity of TSA and home-school communication:

1. Some parents of primary students are not aware that TSA affects neither students' results in schools nor Secondary One Place Allocation.
2. There has been misunderstanding about TSA owing to mass media reports and communication problems. There is an immediate need to strengthen communication with parents and the public so as to help them understand the original intent of TSA.
3. It is necessary to open more channels for communication. While it may not be necessary for EDB to disseminate messages, the public needs the channel to express their views.
4. Professional discussion may not be of much help to the public. It is necessary to seek assistance from public relations or crisis management personnel.
5. TSA was removed from the Key Performance Measures for primary schools in External School Review. Concerns of parents may be related to the lack of information.
6. The additional support for schools with unsatisfactory TSA performance is considered a good arrangement.

Relationship between school-based assessment and TSA:

1. If the design of TSA items aligns with that of the internal assessment in school, it is necessary to consider the need for the continuation of TSA. And if it is decided that TSA will continue, it is necessary to consider allowing schools to participate on a voluntary basis.
2. It is worth considering including items provided by EDB in internal school assessments to facilitate data collection of EDB on student performance.

Support to the retention of TSA:

1. It is good to have one more assessment tool apart from internal assessment in school. Teachers are positive.
2. It is important for schools to protect students. Implementation of TSA should continue if it facilitates student learning; improvement is necessary if the intent and nature of TSA is changed. Related problems can aggravate exponentially.
3. Students are likely to choose not to participate in TSA given a choice, but the focus should be on the need.
4. An attendee in the meeting expressed support for TSA. This is because neither the parent nor the daughters who had taken TSA assessment experienced problems with drilling.
5. TSA should not be abolished if its abolition leads to unforeseeable consequences.

Opposing to the retention of TSA:

1. Some parents who are serving teachers object to the continuation of TSA. Schools exert pressure on teachers upon receiving TSA reports. In spite of its original intent to provide data, TSA brings about negative comparison and pressure.
2. With no information on individual student performance, schools are unable to identify students not attaining basic competencies and will resort to drilling for the entire year level leaving undesirable impacts on students.

Recommendations:

1. Basic Competency Assessment is worth implementing and considered necessary but there is an urgent need for improvement.
2. The design of items and the requirements for thinking skills should be improved.
3. It is necessary to consider different ways to implement TSA and other alternatives, such as alternate-year arrangement, sampling methods, or incorporation of assessment items in internal assessment in school.

Other views:

1. The TSA issue has become a political issue. TSA should not be abolished because of the issue of drilling. Otherwise school-based assessment is next on the list demanded to be abolished.
2. The discussions on TSA have become irrational and political. Many parents who understand and support TSA urge EDB to resolve the issue as soon as possible.
3. The completion of review on TSA by the Committee in February was considered too late.
4. The arrangement of open discussion forum should not be avoided. Committee members can attend the forum to listen to views from the public and reflect to EDB.

Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority
 Summary Report of Views from Focus Group Meetings
 (Primary 6 Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics)
 Review on Territory-wide System Assessment

Background

In response to the recent concerns about Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA) from the public and various stakeholders, the Education Bureau (EDB) has requested the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) to collect views from teachers with the relevant subject expertise. To this end, HKEAA has organised a series of Focus Group (FG) meetings for teachers with a range of teaching experience at Primary 3 and Primary 6 levels of the relevant subjects. In order to have a comprehensive review of opinions on TSA, the Education Assessment Services Division (EASD) of HKEAA has invited a group of teachers teaching Primary 3 and Primary 6 to attend the meetings in mid/late November and early December 2015 respectively. This report summarises the views from teachers teaching Primary 6 and some of them have never been involved in moderation and marking of TSA. This report has been forwarded to EDB as feedback towards setting the future direction of TSA.

Target Groups

A total of 35 representatives from more than 30 primary schools and across three subjects (Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics) attended the meetings. The school representatives included principals, vice principals, panel chairpersons, subject teachers and Primary School Masters or Mistresses (Curriculum Development). The schools involved had a variety of sponsoring body types. The following table shows the number of school representatives as per primary subject level.

Subject \ No.	No. of School Representatives per Subject at Primary 6 Level
Chinese Language	13
English Language	11
Mathematics	11
Total	35

Mode of Meetings

A total of 3 FG meetings were held and each meeting consisted of about 2 hours of

semi-structured questions and responses.

Meeting Focus

The main purpose of the meetings was to collect views from teachers with relevant subject expertise at Primary 6 level. 2013 TSA Primary 6 question papers (with percentage correct of each item) and the marking schemes were tabled for teachers' reference.

The emphasis of each meeting was as follows:

- Item difficulty
- No. of items assessed
- Passage length (for language subjects)
- Reading and listening tasks (for language subjects)
- Range of texts and diversity of question types in reading and speaking (for language subjects)
- Reduction of assessment duration (for Primary 6 Chinese Language only)
- Issues of 'overly tricky questions'
- Removal of Basic Competency attainment rates
- Extra/Remedial lessons for preparation of Primary 6 TSA
- Suitability of TSA supplementary exercises
- Views on mode of TSA and its arrangement

Overview

An overview of the three FG meetings where major issues were discussed and views from the school representatives were summarised as follows:

1. Primary 6 Chinese Language

1.1 Primary 6 Chinese Reading Assessment

- i. The difficulty level of reading passages was found suitable for Primary 6 students. However, students were under pressure and had to rush to complete three reading passages in 35 minutes. (Starting from 2015, the reading assessment has been revised: reduced length of passage to 700-800 words, reduction of assessment time from 35 minutes to 30 minutes and number of items per sub-paper reduced to 22.)
- ii. The topics in Primary 6 Chinese reading are suggested to cover culture, history and biography. Currently, the topics covered TSA are mostly about everyday life.
- iii. Teachers noted that the item types of TSA and Pre-Secondary One Hong Kong Attainment Test (Pre-S1 HKAT) were two total different assessments (especially in terms of item types). Teachers found it difficult to cater for the requirements of both assessments at the same time. The distractors in the items were found to be properly adjusted.

- iv. In TSA, students were required to locate vocabulary items in the passage. Teachers noted that was different from traditional item types, e.g. filling in blanks, making use of vocabulary for sentence making, discriminating between parts of speech and meaning.

1.2 Primary 6 Chinese Listening

- i. The duration of the listening assessment was 20 minutes and teachers felt that this was demanding for Primary 6 students. They pointed out the duration of the listening component in Pre-S1 HKAT was only 10 minutes. All teachers suggested that the listening content be played twice.
- ii. It was suggested one minute should be given to students for reading the items before the listening content was played.
- iii. Some teachers suggested the listening assessment be scrapped and replaced by an assessment involving integrated skills (using Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination as an example).

1.3 Primary 6 Chinese Writing

- i. Some teachers suggested that note writing was not relevant to students' daily life although note writing is a requirement of TSA.
- ii. It was suggested that different writing text-types be required (i.e. narrative, expository and practical writing) and spread across different sub-papers. They considered that this would reduce the pressure felt by the students in completing two pieces of writing in 55 minutes.
- iii. It was suggested the number of words required for writing tasks be mentioned.

1.4 Primary 6 Chinese Audio-visual (CAV) Assessment

The group noted that the students performed quite well in the CAV assessment. No drilling on CAV was in place since teachers did not have suitable materials for such drilling.

1.5 Primary 6 Chinese Oral

The existing oral assessment includes individual performance (i.e. story-telling and presentation) and group discussion. It was suggested that the oral assessment should include story-telling and group discussion only. Some teachers stated that presentation tasks basically required students to compose speech as if it were written text.

2. Primary 6 English Language

2.1 Primary 6 English Listening Items

- i. Regarding the content in the listening assessment, there were concerns about the impact of students' socio-economic background on their understanding of the listening tasks, for example, information about districts. Some teachers commented that as long as students could understand the scripts in general, such impact would be minimal. Moreover, the English lessons covered some scenic spots and districts of Hong Kong.
- ii. Teachers pointed out that they specifically taught certain words about numbers (e.g. double) to prepare them for the listening assessment. They also opined that they referred to the language used in TSA in deciding what vocabulary to be covered in the lessons.
- iii. Teachers agreed that in general the level of difficulty of the syntax which students can comprehend reflects their listening ability.
- iv. Teachers agreed that in general the contents of the listening assessment are not difficult for the students.
- v. It was pointed out that questions which require students to sequence events are difficult and without drilling students would not be able to handle them. The teachers added that students in general do not have enough exposure to authentic situations as far as listening is concerned and in fact the listening assessment helps them identify students' weaknesses in this aspect. Consequently, they can implement remedial measures to help students improve.
- vi. Teachers said items on distinguishing intonation could be demanding for students as they need to pay attention to and then identify a picture which represents the meaning of the intonation. They agreed that items with more explicit clues are easier for students to handle.
- vii. Teachers did not think public concerns about 'overly tricky questions' was valid for the Primary 6 listening items. They added that there should be some more challenging questions to distinguish students' ability. And the fact that listening to the content twice already gives students enough time to handle the items.
- viii. One teacher opined that the preparation time for reading listening items could be extended to aid students.

2.2 Primary 6 English Reading Items

- i. Teachers commented that in general the topics in 2013 TSA Reading are familiar to students, as most of them are covered in textbooks. They added that given the differences between students' socio-economic backgrounds, it is desirable to expose students to topics that might be less familiar to them.
- ii. Teachers agreed that the question type (i.e. Multiple Choice) is enough

to test students' reading strategies.

- iii. Teachers agreed that items on dictionary skills can test students' vocabulary and understanding of parts of speech. They added that this kind of questions help them identify students' lack of awareness of parts of speech.
- iv. Teachers pointed out that some questions are challenging as they involve certain scenarios that are not familiar to students (e.g. having a turkey for Christmas). They also agreed that exposure to unfamiliar scenarios is important in helping students learn English.
- v. Teachers suggested the number of Reading items can be reduced so as to allow students to spend more time on the Writing assessment. They said the reading and writing assessment time is so tight that students' performance is affected. An alternate suggestion was to maintain the number of items but shorten the texts. The teachers commented that students need more time to answer the questions.
- vi. Teachers pointed out that students' concentration span is also an issue. They said that weaker students can only concentrate for the first two parts, but in the last part of reading and in writing, the students would worry that they could not finish. As a result, they completed the assessment in a rush and thus performed badly.

2.3 Primary 6 English Writing Items

- i. Teachers agreed that the format of TSA writing is not an issue. They added that the format is straightforward and students can handle the writing task if they have enough vocabulary.
- ii. Teachers commented that the story writing item aided with pictorial clues can elicit students' vocabulary and writing skills. They added that the students are familiar with the mind-map writing format, but some weaker students may misinterpret the topic. It is also harder for them to elaborate their ideas in a writing task when a mind-map is given rather than pictorial clues.
- iii. Some teachers opined that the word limit in the task (i.e. 80) is not enough for students to provide rich content.

2.4 Primary 6 English Speaking Items

- i. Teachers agreed that the 2013 TSA Primary 6 English items on Speaking were found suitable for Primary 6 students in terms of the topic. They added that the speaking assessment, especially the presentation, can test students' speaking ability.
- ii. Teachers commented that the pictures of 'Presentation' given to the students were clear. They added that the pictures can even be printed

in black and white on A4 paper provided that they are clear to see.

- iii. Teachers commented that Primary 6 students, compared to Primary 3 students, are more aware of the punctuation and the stress when reading the text aloud.
- iv. Some teachers suggested that the question paper for the Presentation task can also be printed on A4 paper and used for note-taking. They added that allowing students to refer to the questions and write their notes on the same piece of paper would help them perform better.

3. Primary 6 Mathematics

- i. Most teachers agreed that TSA Primary 6 Mathematics sub-papers were useful in assessing the basic knowledge and skills of primary pupils at the end of Key Stage 2.
- ii. Teachers suggested that the trial version of the Basic Competency for Primary Mathematics should be revised. Some KS2 Basic Competency descriptors were tedious and taught in KS1 only, for instance, KS2-M1-1, KS2-M1-2, KS2-M3-1, KS2-M4-1, KS2-M5-1, KS2-S2-2 and KS2-S4-1.

KS2-M1-1	Identify Hong Kong money.
KS2-M1-2	Exchange and use money.
KS2-M3-1	Compare the length of objects and the distance between objects directly.
KS2-M4-1	Compare the weight of objects directly.
KS2-M5-1	Compare the capacity of containers directly.
KS2-S2-2	Group 2-D shapes.
KS2-S4-1	Compare the size of angles.

- iii. Regarding TSA Primary 6 Mathematics papers, teachers agreed that most items involved only simple calculations. They also felt that the contexts of most items were related to the daily life of primary students.
- iv. It was felt that most item types were easy and set at appropriate level in order to identify the strengths and weaknesses of Primary 6 students. Teachers said they could easily prepare worksheets for different dimensions and topics by selecting suitable items from the past papers of TSA.

4. Removal of Basic Competency Attainment Rates

- i. The data give in TSA reports provided useful feedback to schools. Although the percentage of students achieving Basic Competency had

been deleted from the school report, some principals would ask their Mathematics Panel Head to estimate from the facility indexes in the item analysis report. Some teachers mentioned that they had difficulty gauging students' levels from this data and that some sponsoring bodies ranked their schools according to students' performance in various dimensions (e.g. reading and listening).

- ii. School management and teachers still worried about the pressure from EDB to raise the academic standard compared to the results of previous years. Some principals would compare the correct percentage of each sub-paper with the territory-wide percentage while others would track the changes in the percentage correct in each dimension across years.
 - iii. A teacher said that the 'Percentage of Achieving Basic Competency' is necessary so he can accurately compare his students' data with the territory-wide data.
5. Extra/Remedial Lessons for the Preparation of Primary 6 TSA
- i. Drilling was necessary in order to prepare for TSA. Extra supplementary exercises were required and the amount of homework needed increased. One teacher pointed out that her school had ordered that nine supplementary exercises (three for each subject) be given to their students.
 - ii. As the school-based support from EDB was not adequate, teachers were urged by their school management to drill students by conducting tutorial lessons before or after normal school hours. The extra time spent on tutorial lessons prolonged the duration staying in school and prohibited students from joining extra-curricular activities.
 - iii. Some teachers stated that the formats of school's internal exams and tests were similar to TSA. Some pointed out that the requirements of TSA in the Chinese components were being merged into the school-based teaching materials.
 - iv. Regarding the use of TSA exercise, some teachers commented that the TSA paper is more authentic and relevant in terms of vocabulary and text-types than the available textbooks.
 - v. Some teachers added that they incorporate TSA item formats into homework and internal assessment as they considered them a measure to prepare students for TSA. Some teachers explained that they do not think training or drilling help improve TSA results. They said the measures should rather be on enhancing teaching to help improve students' English ability and thereby achieve better results in TSA.
 - vi. A teacher said that having their teaching driven by TSA is meaningful. However, when they are being pushed to make students achieve good

results, they found it very stressful.

6. Suitability of TSA Supplementary Exercises

Most schools would ask students to buy one or two supplementary exercise books for each level of Primary 4 to Primary 6. However, most items in the supplementary exercise books aimed at the standard set in the Pre-Secondary 1 HKAT which was beyond Basic Competency level.

7. Views on Mode of TSA and its Arrangements

- i. Teachers thought that the current practice of conducting TSA in alternate years should be continued unless better methods for the allocation of Secondary One school places could be developed to replace the Pre-Secondary 1 HKAT.
- ii. Teachers said the alternate-year opt-in arrangement of Primary 6 TSA is fine as long as data is provided showing their students' performance. They also said that without the alternate-year opt-in arrangement, students would have to take two assessments (i.e. Pre-Secondary 1 HKAT and TSA) in the same year and that would overload them.
- iii. Teachers commented that implementing Primary 6 TSA by sampling makes no difference to them regarding preparing students for the assessment. They would prepare as usual as they are not certain which students would be chosen for the assessment. The teachers added that they are not sure whether having a 5% of sample is sufficient to represent the performance of their school.

8. Others

8.1 Use of TSA Data

- i. Teachers were required to propose improvement and remedial measures after they knew their student performances from the TSA reports.
- ii. Teachers agreed that TSA data were objective and useful to curriculum planning of Primary 6 classes. For Primary 4 and Primary 5, some schools would compare the test and examination scores of different classes at the same level.
- iii. Some teachers suggested deleting the territory-wide correct percentage of each item provided in the TSA reports while others thought that it was useful for comparing with the school correct percentage.
- iv. Some teachers thought that it would be appropriate to provide only the school correct percentage of each item (territory-wide data not needed) because teachers should be trusted to make professional judgment on how to make use of TSA data in improving teaching methods and

enhancing students' learning strategies.

- v. Some teachers wished to have a report which only includes the data of WS1/SEN. It was felt that this would allow a high degree of transparency.
- vi. Some teachers pointed out that during the External School Review they were asked about the TSA results of their schools.
- vii. A teacher said that her principal compared her school with other schools under the same sponsoring body using TSA results, and she found that very stressful.
- viii. Teachers agreed that school management should be informed of the actual purpose of TSA data so as to stop the making of unnecessary comparisons.

8.2 Onscreen Marking

On-screen marking should be continued because it could provide training to markers and reduce the workload on teachers.

8.3 Past TSA Question Papers and Mark Schemes

The current practice of uploading sub-papers and marking schemes to the Basic Competency Assessment website was appreciated because teachers could make reference to the format and item types of TSA papers in setting tests or examinations papers for their own schools.

9. Observations

After discussions with stakeholders, several key problems surrounding TSA have emerged. These problems underlie much of the recent media controversy concerning TSA and they are as follows.

9.1 The Comparison Problem

- i. Since the cessation of publishing Basic Competency attainment rates for primary schools, a problematic trend has emerged. Principals and school sponsoring bodies are still making comparisons within and/or between schools. However, in the absence of properly calculated attainment rates, they are attempting to make such comparisons by using 'raw percentage correct' figures. This process is risky because percentage correct is not a valid substitute for properly calculated attainment rates. Attainment rates were calculated using sophisticated statistical measure (psychometrics) to take into account the relative difficulty of various items and sub-papers encountered by students. (Not all students do identical papers).
- ii. There is a lot of pressure on panel chairs to calculate percentage

correct. Furthermore panel chairs and teachers are pressured if these invalid measures do not show their school favourably against the territory-wide data or other schools under the same sponsoring body. Comparing 'raw percentage correct' figures exacerbates this problem even further. Teachers are under pressure not only from unfair comparisons but from unfair comparisons based on invalid data.

9.2 The Over-drilling Problem

- i. Familiarizing students with TSA question types, text types and procedures is reasonable. However, drilling will not significantly increase students' performance on TSA if the students do not have adequate knowledge and ability in the subject being assessed.
- ii. Schools need to ensure that students have the basics needed to pass key stage 1 requirements. This process starts in Primary 1, continues in Primary 2 and should be consolidated in the first part of Primary 3. Under these circumstances familiarizing students with the assessment format may help improve TSA results. Students who do not attain Basic Competency in Primary 3 TSA need special attention because results have shown that they are unlikely to achieve Basic Competency in Primary 6 TSA.

Education Assessment Services Division
Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority
17 December 2015

District-based Seminars for Parents – Wong Tai Sin, Kwun Tong, Sai Kung

Date: 16 December 2015 (Wednesday)
Time: 6:30 - 8:30 pm
Venue: Pok Oi Hospital 80th Anniversary Tang Ying Hei College
Organiser: Education Bureau

Summary

Participation of different stakeholders:

1. The retention or abolition of Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA) should be decided by parents, students and teachers.
2. Many policies of the Education Bureau (EDB) are not flexible enough, and the consultation is insufficient.

Tricky question, excessive items and lengthy texts:

1. Different from the design at the initial stage, items of the existing TSA are getting more and more difficult in terms of content and quantity.

Drilling:

1. The education in Hong Kong at present is dominated by the culture of TSA-oriented drilling. EDB should take the responsibility in a professional manner to monitor the education system and examine the books and supplementary exercises in the market to ensure their quality and standards.
2. The EDB officers should take a look at the market and they will find that there are a large number of TSA supplementary exercises for Primary 1 to Secondary 3 students. Such exercises would not have been published if schools had not required their students to buy them for drilling.
3. Children need to finish over ten pieces of homework, four to five of which are TSA-related assignments. Students often have to work until 11 pm to complete their homework. Heavy homework has dampened students' interest in learning.
4. When the TSA was first established, most schools did not drill students for TSA and teachers acknowledged the original intent of TSA. The original intent of TSA has changed after 11 years of implementation.
5. If school management committees demand their schools to appeal for the first band students, schools will definitely drill students for TSA. It is important for school principals to keep the gate.

6. TSA can enhance students' competencies in Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics, the vocabulary and question items are too difficult. For students to attain the standards, drilling is necessary.

Support for students and schools:

1. TSA can facilitate timely provision of support for the students in need, particularly the ones with special educational needs.

Support to the retention of TSA:

1. Abolishing TSA now cannot reduce competition among schools. The problem does not stem from TSA itself. Schools are now more commercialised than business organisations.
2. TSA should not be abolished until there is a better alternative to replace it.

Opposing to the retention of TSA:

1. TSA assesses students using an empirical standard. However, children should be encouraged to develop in various areas apart from acquiring knowledge.
2. Internal assessments at schools will suffice for showing the levels or competencies of students. Public examinations are not necessary as they place a heavy burden on teachers, parents and students.
3. With a large quantity of learning resources, today's learning should be diversified allowing students to learn in different modes. They should not be assessed through the use of one standardised assessment.

Recommendations:

1. EDB should directly use data of internal assessments in schools. TSA hinders catering for learner diversity in school.
2. TSA components can be incorporated into computer assignments, and the content of assessment does not have to be bound by textbooks.
3. Alternatives should be explored to replace TSA to ensure that students have pleasurable learning and that EDB is able to collect data.
4. Assistance should be sought from professionals to study the feasibility of sampling data. Reference can be made to the practice in the United States by taking 5-10% of students as sampling units.
5. EDB officers may conduct a random inspection at schools to check students' assignments, dictations and handbooks in order to know about their levels, strengths and weaknesses as well as the course of development. It is meaningless to have drills.
6. EDB may collect views of parents at schools annually to understand the real needs of students.

7. Given the small changes and differences in the TSA data over years, it is not necessary to collect data every year.

Other views:

1. There are many methods of data collection, e.g. sampling, individual surveys. Besides, upon collecting data, EDB does not provide support for schools in light of students' difficulties.
2. Quantifying education gives a hard time not only to parents and students but also frontline teaching force and teachers. To enable teachers to teach effectively, they must be given more room to put their focus back on teaching and students.
3. The intent of TSA is fine but problems have emerged. EDB should take its responsibility to monitor schools and disclose to parents the schools with drilling practices.

Speakers' response:

1. Primary 3, Primary 6 and Secondary 3 are the three key learning stages. The rationale of TSA is that students' progress upon completion of each key learning stage can be examined in order to provide support for areas in need.
2. The selection of Chinese, English and Mathematics as three subjects of TSA is based on the consideration that language and numeracy are important basic skills in each key learning stage. EDB also attaches great importance to other competencies and subjects.
3. TSA is merely a tool. Apart from quantitative assessment, there should also be qualitative assessment, e.g. sense of belonging of students.
4. EDB will address the drilling issue. The original intent of TSA is good but there are problems with its implementation. As such, a comprehensive review will be conducted.
5. TSA has been continuously enhanced and the reporting format has also been improved. Schools are no longer provided with their attainment rates of TSA and the format of reporting can be simplified. However, the function of TSA to provide feedback to teaching and learning will be weakened.
6. The Coordinating Committee will review the modes of implementation of TSA, which may include sampling methods. However, schools may not be able to obtain feedback to learning and teaching if sampling methods are adopted.
7. TSA reports provide schools with information on the overall competencies of their students and the areas that need to be strengthened.
8. EDB is willing to review TSA with an open mind in order to facilitate schools and students more effectively.
9. Online item analysis reports for TSA are available to provide quantitative and qualitative feedback for teachers to identify the learning difficulties of students objectively.

10. EDB values the views and opinions of students. Officers have been sent to attend the Children's Rights Forum. EDB will collect views from different stakeholders.
11. EDB has organised a series of seminars for teachers to enhance their skills in using assessment data without having to rely on drilling.
12. The collection of internal examination papers and homework by EDB officers may offend school principals and teachers.

**District-based Seminar for Parents – Sha Tin District, Tai Po District,
North District**

Date: 17 December 2015 (Thursday)
Time: 6:30 – 9:10 pm
Venue: GCC & ITKD Lau Pak Lok Secondary School
Organiser: Education Bureau

Summary

Use of Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA) data:

1. TSA does not provide individual student reports and results. It is not clear how schools make use of the related data to help individual students and those who have special educational needs.
2. Parents do not understand how schools make use of TSA data to cater for learner diversity.
3. TSA questions are getting more difficult whereas the standards of university students are getting lower. How does EDB make use of assessment data?
4. Parents enquired how EDB made use of assessment data to render concrete support for schools.
5. Parents asked whether TSA needs to be comparable to those in other countries and set the attainment rate at the 70th percentile.
6. Primary 3 students of different cohorts may not have the same learning performance. It is not possible for teachers to use TSA data of the previous year to follow up the learning of students in the next cohort.
7. TSA report is not useful for the Primary 4 students of the next school year. Primary 4 students have too much to learn.

Participation of different stakeholders:

1. The members of the TSA Moderation Committees from tertiary institutes may not understand the standards and learning of Primary 3 students.
2. Secretary for Education should have dialogue with parents. EDB should have the responsibility to address issues.
3. Views from all stakeholders including those of parents and students should be collected.

Tricky questions, excessive items and lengthy texts:

1. Knowledge covered in the Reading Comprehension for Chinese Language does not align with that of the curriculum and textbooks. TSA seems to be first a selection tool.
2. It is necessary to review the level of difficulty of TSA questions as well as the assessment time.

Over-drilling:

1. As gatekeeper, the EDB should monitor the booklists of schools and the purchase of supplementary exercises required of students by schools.
2. The good exemplars provided by EDB to schools may induce drilling specifically for certain item design in some schools.
3. The EDB should be responsible for handling the problem of over-drilling in schools. The situation is especially serious in schools with students showing good learning performance.
4. Parents with children having special educational needs complained about the difficulty in finding a school that does not administer drills, which renders pleasurable learning impossible.
5. If drills for TSA are imposed incessantly, moral and behaviour education will be left deficient.
6. TSA reports should not be passed to schools causing pressure on them and drills to follow.

More demanding school-based assessment and curriculum:

1. TSA has also affected kindergarten students. Their homework has become difficult.

Support for students and schools:

1. For the support rendered to schools based on TSA results, there should be sufficient communication with schools as well as a review on the effectiveness of such support.
2. More support measures should be provided for schools.
3. Teachers who are too busy handling assessment data are unable to provide one-to-one support for students.

Opposing to the retention of TSA:

1. Primary 3 TSA should be abolished. Play and rest time should be returned to students.
2. TSA is a vicious cycle and should be abolished immediately.

Recommendations:

1. Parents in Hong Kong should be allowed to cast vote on the retention or abolition of TSA.
2. TSA is to be conducted using a sampling method with teachers marking the papers themselves. Only schools should know the TSA results. EDB should only collect data without school names disclosed.
3. Reviewing TSA is not enough. A comprehensive review on the implementation of the entire curriculum is necessary.
4. Adults should be invited to participate in TSA. Their assessment results should be compared with those of students.
5. There should be school-based decision on their direction for teaching.
6. More meetings should be held to collect the views of parents and school principals.

Other views:

1. Besides TSA, schools can also use other assessment methods or alternatives to help students.
2. In the past ten years, students should have taken psychometric tests apart from TSA.
3. There has been much loss due to TSA. Students have lost interest in learning.
4. Officers do not seem to admit that TSA has problems and they are attempting to idealise TSA.
5. The circular to schools on stop ceasing over-drilling caused negative sentiments. It shows EDB's attempt to shove off responsibility.
6. Officers are not aware of the current situations assuming that parents have the right to decide if their children should be engaged in drills administered by school.
7. Respect for the agenda arrangement is necessary. The discussion should start on time at 7 o'clock.

Speakers' response:

1. In conducting a comprehensive review of TSA, views of parents as well as other stakeholders will be collected. An open mind will be adopted with no presupposition so that members of the Committee could be given space for professional discussion.
2. TSA Moderation Committees are composed of members from school teachers, and not predominated by university scholars or assessment experts. The members are conversant with the standards and learning of Primary 3 students.
3. Currently, TSA report provides question item analysis of the students' basic competencies at territory-wide level. Based on the data, teachers can plan improvement measures for specific teaching points in order to enhance

effectiveness of teaching. To avoid labeling effect, TSA Report does not disclose names of students.

4. School-based support services, provided by EDB sections or by joint efforts of EDB sections and other tertiary institutes, are open for schools' selection based on needs of schools. EDB also provides Web-based Learning and Teaching Support for teachers to use in and outside the classroom in order to assist students to learn better.
5. To address issues related to TSA papers including item difficulty, length of texts and assessment papers, the Committee set up a Working Group to review the Papers and Question Design of TSA.
6. TSA has its unique function. It represents just part of the curriculum requirements enabling schools and students to master basic competencies. TSA is not a sieving tool.

District-based Seminar for Parents — Central and Western District, Eastern District, Southern District, Wan Chai District, Islands District

Date: 7 January 2016 (Thursday)
Time: 6:30-8:30 pm
Venue: CNEC Lau Wing Sang Secondary School
Organiser: Education Bureau

Summary

Use of Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA) data:

1. TSA only provides school reports of students' overall performance. It is yet to know how to improve student performance.
2. TSA can be replaced by schools' internal examinations.
3. TSA reports are announced in the second half of the year. Student participants that year cannot benefit from the reports.

Participation of different stakeholders:

1. It is hard to have a real discussion without the presence of teachers in the district-based seminars.
2. Parents should have the right to choose to participate or not, but there is a concern that schools or students may be affected by parents' decisions.

Tricky questions, excessive items and lengthy texts:

1. It is harsh for students to have assessments on so many subjects at the same time.
2. There are worries that the modification of Primary 3 TSA papers could not be improved unless overall problems are solved.
3. The reading items in Primary 3 TSA only drill students for test-taking skills. They do not assess their reading skills.
4. There are problems with the item design of TSA, for example, the diagrams of Mathematics questions are not clear making selection of the right options difficult.

Drilling:

1. Students have to take part in TSA in Primary 3. Their drilling starts from Primary 1 and 2. We should foster students' self-care ability, self-confidence and interests rather than drilling in this period.
2. It is believed that the pressure is from top to bottom. Where there is student

assessment, schools will have to cope with it. The assessment will turn out to be assessment of schools. TSA is like putting the cart before the horse.

3. TSA leads to comparisons and the comparisons affect reputation of schools forcing schools to drill students.
4. Schools assess the performance of the contract teachers according to the results of TSA. Teachers have no choice but to drill students.
5. Incorporating drilling for TSA in everyday teaching causes negative sentiments.
6. Schools state that they do not drill students, but drills are in fact incorporated into their school examinations.
7. On one hand, EDB is opposed to drilling. On the other hand, EDB conducts comparison between TSA and publishers' supplementary exercises. This is contradictory. Making comparison is unnecessary if there is no TSA.
8. The concern is that schools will conduct various drilling in secret regardless of different modes of assessment.
9. The EDB should monitor schools to refrain from drilling students.
10. A channel should be provided for parents to reflect to EDB the situation of drilling in schools and the pressure of students.
11. It is proposed that the causes of over-drilling in schools need to be identified.

Excessive lesson time:

1. Students do not have time to play, not to mention the time for further reflection.

More demanding school-based assessment and curriculum:

1. Schools in general provide graded enrichment and remedial courses for students of different academic abilities in order to cope with TSA. EDB should standardise the requirements of the curriculum.

Support for students and schools:

1. TSA has been implemented for many years. Schools in Hong Kong are of different standards and teachers are not able to help students in need.
2. Good education cannot be realised unless there is communication between EDB and teachers at middle management level.
3. Teachers should not be blamed for the failure of TSA. Training should not be arranged for the principals and teachers until the completion of the TSA review. This is to ensure that no extra pressure is added on teachers affecting student learning.

Publicity of TSA:

1. Speakers in the public should quote both positive and negative impacts of TSA as examples in the discussion.

Support to the retention of TSA:

1. A calm attitude should be taken towards TSA.
2. Drilling is acceptable and there is pressure in reality, but the abolition of TSA is not a good way to settle the problem. Many people opposing are making an issue of TSA.
3. Some people agree to have TSA but suggest using the anonymous sampling method to assess the basic competencies of students and to review whether the standard of TSA is in line with that of the world. Reference can be made to the practice of HKDSE, which is to release the comments after the examinations to provide students with the common mistakes as a reference.

Opposing to the retention of TSA:

1. Do not agree with "motivation" = "expectation" x "value". It is believed that motivation should come from interest in learning.
2. To cope with the huge amount of homework, students are unable to achieve whole-person development.
3. Schools have not provided any feedback to the relevant parties based on TSA.
4. Students are trapped in drilling for TSA where limited question types weaken students' learning intention and desire for improvement.

Suggestions:

1. TSA or Primary 3 TSA should be abolished.
2. TSA should be suspended for a review in order to minimise the harm it brings to parents and students.
3. Each student should only take TSA once-in-a-lifetime.
4. Setting up an assessment bank for assessing the basic competencies and opening it for use by schools as a daily assignment are suggested. Schools can collect information about individual or overall student performance of basic competencies. Data can be sent to EDB.
5. The EDB can release to parents the analysis of TSA results to enhance the communication between parents and children to facilitate parents' support for their children.

Other views:

1. The speaker's use of an elite athlete as an example is confusing. The example focuses on individual performance. TSA focuses on overall performance of a school and its follow-up.
2. There is a gap between the ideal practice and the issue of practicability. For example, teachers in schools require students to borrow books more often with an intent to develop their reading skills. Books that are borrowed by students to avoid penalty are not read in reality.

3. Students do not understand why they have to take part in TSA and just sit in to finish the assessment for the sake of being assessed.
4. The EDB should monitor publishers so that the designs of supplementary exercises are in line with the items of TSA.
5. Some parents are disappointed with the EDB's preemptive decision to retain TSA just with amendments.

Speakers' response:

1. There are four key learning stages for students from primary to secondary schools. EDB would like to administer a Basic Competency Assessment between the key learning stages. It is like taking a "snapshot" of students' abilities to identify the ones in need for making timely adjustments.
2. TSA is just one of the many student assessment tools. It is not the only assessment indicator.
3. Students' individual strengths and weaknesses can be found from internal school assessments. TSA is a territory-wide assessment for all students in Hong Kong. TSA data is provided for schools as reference to show the overall strengths and weaknesses of students and help schools to offer instant feedback to students.
4. TSA is the policy of EDB and all the government and subsidised schools have to participate in it. All students need to take part in TSA as it is held on school days. EDB would not penalise the students for applying leave.
5. It is proposed that parents can refer to the recommendations of the Coordinating Committee and check whether schools are still drilling students before insisting not to join TSA. Although there is school-based curriculum, TSA can provide data as reference for schools to understand their students' ability in comparison with other students in Hong Kong.
6. Designing questions is a non-linear process and it takes around eight months. Moderation of the items is still in progress. Whether the items are in line with the abilities of students would be monitored. The process is not yet over and the moderation will be in line with the recommendations from the Coordinating Committee.
7. The EDB, the HKEAA and the related working groups have closely monitored and analysed the TSA items. They have consulted frontline teachers to understand the difficulties faced by students. The working groups of the 'Coordinating Committee on Basic Competency Assessment and Assessment Literacy Review on TSA' will conduct a study in depth to achieve understanding of the specific question types, sentence structures and even the problem of page turning and the number of items.
8. The working group acknowledged the concerns about the reading assessment of TSA and is addressing them accordingly.
9. As far as the issue of inspection is concerned, the responsibility of schools is to

educate students. EDB and schools should work as partners. EDB should not impose their way on schools.

10. It is admitted that there have been blind spots during implementation. Reviews will be conducted on the need to strengthen professional development for principals, teachers and curriculum leaders.
11. It is understood that parents are worried about the drilling situation in schools. There are a lot of supplementary lessons. Drilling is definitely opposed as students need to have a balanced development.
12. The EDB agreed to take up the responsibility to review the implementation and operation of TSA. It is hoped that parents, schools and the community can collaborate with one another sincerely.
13. The Coordinating Committee will submit the review report by late January or early February. It is suggested that further discussion be conducted before rushing to conclusion at the present stage.
14. The EDB attaches importance to the opportunity to conduct a review on TSA in the hope of minimising the drilling culture. Valuable comments from parents have been noted down.
15. Students can assess own abilities by using the Student Assessment (SA) question bank. Students can get a report after completing the questions. Parents can also read the reports of their children and facilitate their improvement. It is a good suggestion to establish an assessment bank with items assessing student abilities. A detailed study will be conducted.
16. Under the existing policy, textbooks but not supplementary exercise are to be submitted for review. EDB values views of parents and solutions would be discussed accordingly.
17. The example cited about an athlete did not intend to promote elitism. In fact, the training approach for many athletes could have gone wrong. The examples cited could apply to all.

**District-based Seminar for Parents – Kwai Tsing District, Tsuen Wan District,
Tuen Mun District, Yuen Long District**

Date: 8 January 2016 (Friday)
Time: 6:35-8:45 pm
Venue: Tsuen Wan Government Secondary School
Organiser: Education Bureau

Summary

The use of the Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA) data:

1. Primary 3 TSA data are not useful for the participating students as they will proceed to Primary 4 after taking the assessment. Also, such data are not useful for Primary 2 students as they are not the same batch of students.
2. Students have to learn in a gradual manner. For example, if students do not learn well at Primary 2, their learning at Primary 3, Primary 4 and Primary 5 levels will be affected.

The involvement of different stakeholders :

1. A parent said that the school manager had told parents that there would be no drilling for TSA. The parent would convey the information obtained from the seminar to the school to check for consistency.
2. TSA is an assessment on students' basic competencies. Good teachers should be able to have a grasp of the performance of their students and there is no need to have a separate assessment.

Tricky questions, excessive items and lengthy texts:

1. There are too many items in TSA for primary students, putting tremendous pressure on students and parents.
2. A former examiner responsible for item setting indicated that TSA papers have been getting more and more difficult over the past five years and the items did not match the levels of primary students, querying how EDB examines the levels of difficulty of the items.
3. A tutor from the Hong Kong Institute of Education pointed out that instead of assessing students' basic competencies, TSA items are just absurd and misleading students..
4. TSA papers are getting more and more difficult, bringing up a question as to how EDB determines the levels of difficulty of TSA papers.

Drilling :

1. Drilling is useful as practice makes perfect (e.g. for arithmetic in Mathematics), though it does not help enhance comprehension skills.
2. EDB should encourage students to read or participate in other activities, and allow sufficient room for teachers to develop other abilities of their students. Paying too much attention to academic achievements will only lead to “the culture of drilling”.
3. Schools drill their students because EDB informs them that they are unable to meet the standards and have to find out the solutions.
4. Schools give TSA past papers to students as homework.
5. While students need to handle more than ten pieces of homework every day, they are unable to really understand some difficult items and what can be done is to push or drill them.
6. There are arguments between parents and children because of homework.

Excessive lesson time :

1. The current textbooks are much harder than those in half-day schooling period.
2. The concept of whole-day schooling (with lessons in the morning and different activities in the afternoon) has been distorted by TSA. Students need to have lessons even in the afternoon. Thus, TSA should be abolished.

More demanding internal assessments and curriculum:

1. The intention of TSA is good but adjustments should be made in connection with its operation. Activities for six-year-old students should continue to be conducted. Those difficult items in Chinese Language should be reviewed (e.g. questions about “data” in Chinese Language for Primary 1 students).
2. As schools assume that the students who proceed to primary school are literate, both the Chinese Language and English Language examination papers are very difficult.
3. There are a lot of new words in 2009 TSA papers of Chinese Language. In order to cope with TSA, teachers do not have time to elaborate each question clearly.
4. Primary students did not need to do comprehension exercises several years ago. For now, to prepare the students for Primary 3 TSA, the whole process starts earlier and the relevant training is incorporated into the lessons..
5. It is difficult for junior primary students to focus on topics that are more academic. EDB should conduct a review of the curriculum.

Provision of support to students and schools:

1. While it is good that EDB makes an analysis of TSA data, teachers are unable to help individual students. EDB should provide parents with assessment results of

individual students so that parents can know more about the learning progress of their children and decide whether to seek help from schools.

2. Schools have done a lot for students because of TSA. However, there is a discrepancy, even an imbalance, between the objective of EDB and the work of schools.
3. Apart from online resources, it is difficult to identify other assistance provided by EDB for schools and students.
4. EDB points out that learning and teaching materials are available online, while indicating that teachers only need to teach as usual and do not need to use supplementary exercises. That seems contradictory.

Support to the retention of TSA :

1. The purpose of TSA is acknowledged.
2. TSA can help schools to teach students in accordance with their aptitude. It is good that EDB provides guidelines for TSA.

Opposing to the retention of TSA:

1. TSA is a superfluous assessment.
2. EDB makes use of TSA results to put pressure on schools.
3. The meaning of TSA is distorted by many schools. Schools keep drilling their students for school reputation, more resources or avoiding the closure of schools.
4. According to a report prepared by the Legislative Council on the education in Finland, the learning hours in Finland are about half of that in Hong Kong while the rankings of these two places in the Programme for International Student Assessment are more or less the same. It shows that TSA is ineffective.
5. Internal assessments, examinations and feedback are adequate. The definition of basic competency should be clarified.
6. In addition to a large number of parents who support the abolition of TSA, over half of the teachers support the abolition of TSA. Parents may be ignorant but teachers should not be more ignorant than parents.

Suggestions:

1. Instead of carrying out TSA, resources should be allocated to schools for recruiting more teachers or implementing small class teaching to maximise the benefits.

Other opinions :

1. Students learn better when they are learning happily.
2. The examples of Mathematics shown by EDB are simple and easy, and it will be all right if students can learn in line with such standards.
3. Some parents do not know whether TSA is good or not, but they do not harbour

resentment towards it.

4. Since non-Chinese speaking students do not have support at home, it is more difficult for them to learn Chinese.
5. Parents prefer their children to study at schools with more homework.
6. Some parents do not put too much pressure on their children. As long as they are willing to do homework, it does not matter if they get the answers right or wrong.
7. Education is not only about knowledge but also about many other aspects such as morals. Yet, many schools just overlook that.
8. Some students show signs of emotional disorder or self-harm behaviour. Some students have to travel a long way from home to school because of the central allocation. As a result, they are too exhausted to concentrate on lessons and homework. It is hoped that EDB will not implement spoon-fed education.
9. EDB does not trust schools. A member from the Coordinating Committee stated that teachers do not have the ability to ascertain the levels of students' basic competencies.
10. This district-based seminar for parents is a fake consultation. EDB has already made the decision to retain TSA.
11. Some parent voluntary workers pointed out that some teachers do not like TSA. A kindergarten teacher has resigned and set up a learning centre to help children to learn through the activity approach.
12. The examples cited by EDB show that students are able to reflect on their own performance after giving answers and then make progress. In fact, those students treat self-evaluation and reflection as part of their homework.
13. Some parents queried about EDB's arrangements to inform schools about the district-based seminars for parents. A lot of parents did not get the related information. EDB has done many things that broke the trust of parents.
14. Parents are looking forward to the response from EDB and a channel of communication should be established.
15. Parents are concerned how the Coordinating Committee views and handles their opinions.

Speakers' responses:

1. Parents' views collected by EDB through this district-based seminar will be submitted to the Coordinating Committee for consideration, and the Coordinating Committee will submit a report to EDB.
2. TSA data shows the overall performance of students but not the performance of individual reports. Such data can provide feedback to learning and teaching. For example, teachers can adjust the teaching practices according to the attainment of basic competency of students. For those students who have already proceeded to Primary 4, teachers can still follow up and offer assistance

in light of their performance at Primary 3.

3. Provision of individual student reports to parents calls for the collection of additional personal information of students. Unnecessary drilling may be caused if personal information is given.
4. Primary 3 TSA covers the first key learning stage, i.e. the learning content from Primary 1 to Primary 3. As such, there is nothing wrong for Primary 2 students to learn the related basic competencies.
5. Internal school assessments and TSA are different tools with different purposes. While TSA covers the basic competencies of the key learning stage concerned, internal school assessments may not cover the basic competencies of the whole stage. The questions of internal school assessments may vary because of learner diversity.
6. The functions of internal school assessments should not be negated because they can show the performance of individual students, while TSA cannot serve this purpose.
7. The questions in the supplementary exercises found in bookshops may not be the real items of TSA.
8. The fact that schools should help students acquire basic competencies is acknowledged and EDB should respect schools' professional decisions for working out methods to facilitate students to learn.
9. There are differences between appropriate practices and over-drilling. Schools should make professional judgements to meet students' needs.
10. Support services for schools as well as the development of online TSA resources by EDB can give more room for teachers and lighten their workload.
11. TSA items are set by frontline teachers, and are moderated by the Moderation Committee consisting of EDB and HKEAA representatives and teachers.
12. Every year, there are around 1 000 teachers responsible for the marking of TSA papers. They will submit their comments on items and students' performance to HKEAA.
13. HKEAA is collecting views on the levels of difficulty of TSA items for improvements.
14. In analysing items, correct response rates instead of attainment rates should be considered.
15. There may be different items for a particular basic competency to assess the performance of students from different perspectives. In this way, teachers will be able to get more information and thoroughly consider how to help students to learn.
16. Learning should be fun, so we should plan how to help students learn happily.
17. Primary 1 students in Finland can choose what subjects to study. It is not appropriate to make a comparison between Finland and Hong Kong merely based on the outcome.

18. In Australia, one-to-one personalised services are provided for students with special educational needs. However, it is not possible for Hong Kong to provide such a kind of services owing to the differences in the allocation of resources.
19. With EDB's resources, their team has been able to offer assistance to 100 schools to facilitate their development. Every week, 33 colleagues went to the schools to have collaborative lesson planning, participate in frontline teaching and help teachers make good use of assessment data to provide feedback to learning and teaching and to facilitate self-directed learning. In many foreign countries, such support is not available for schools. This scheme has attracted schools in Macau and the Mainland to come to Hong Kong to learn the experience or take part in it.
20. Various appropriate methods will be considered, including the abolition or suspension of TSA, and conducting TSA on a sampling basis or in alternate years.

District-based Seminar for Parents –Kowloon City District, Sham Shui Po District, Yau Tsim Mong District

Date: 11 January 2016 (Monday)
Time: 6:35-8:40 pm
Venue: Lecture Theatre, 4/F, West Block, EDB Kowloon Tong
Education Services Centre
Organiser: Education Bureau

Summary

Use of Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA) data:

1. The Education Bureau (EDB) should provide TSA data for parents to facilitate them to follow up the learning situation of their children and preparing them for secondary school education.
2. The EDB was suspected to be making use of the TSA data to identify the weaker students for the purpose of implementing elite education.
3. The EDB could use sampling method to implement TSA if it was not a means for determining which schools to be closed. It was considered unnecessary for all Primary 3 students to be assessed yearly.
4. The sole purpose of EDB to collect data has left students exposed to pressure brought about by drills.
5. The EDB should inquire if it was true that the EDB officers had imposed pressure on some principals by quoting TSA results as reflected by some principals. The original intent of TSA has been distorted now, so EDB should consider its abolition.
6. Parents do not understand the purposes of TSA and how it helps student learning. Students do not understand the benefits of TSA either.

Participation of different stakeholders:

1. To solve the problems derived from TSA, the Government and experts should study how to enhance TSA to reduce pressure on students and parents.

Tricky and excessive questions and lengthy texts:

1. The content of TSA was excessively difficult which might lead to doubts that TSA was not used for assessing students' basic competencies.

Drilling:

1. Teachers focused only on test-taking skills for TSA, so students' interest in learning was stifled.

2. TSA was implemented in the form of examination. Teachers would certainly resort to traditional approach to preparing students for it which in turn imposed pressure on students.
3. TSA question items are given to students by schools as a kind of homework as early as from Primary 1, and this violates the original intent of TSA. EDB should handle such problem.
4. It is unreasonable for schools' drilling students for TSA when the results do not affect students' personal academic results, their allocation to secondary schools and the "banding" of schools.
5. With reference to the past TSA papers, students are required to finish many items within a short period of time. Such paper design would inevitably drive schools to drill students' test-taking skills.
6. Students are often assigned more than ten assignments on daily basis. Excessive drilling for TSA administered by teachers put students under intense pressure.

Excessive lesson time:

1. The implementation of TSA renders a necessity for teachers to rush learning and teaching to keep up with schedule. Students in turn spend more time on learning and assignments leading to pressure and even anxiety.

More demanding assessment and curriculum in schools:

1. Assuming Basic Competency (BC) is covered in the school curriculum, it should be considered acceptable for schools to just send their internal assessment results to EDB.
2. The EDB should review the level of difficulty of the curriculum at primary level.

Support for students and schools:

1. Some schools request exemption from TSA for students with special educational needs, but it would single out the students for identification.
2. The EDB was inquired about how schools would be supported and how drillings would be followed up.
3. The EDB officers should visit schools to understand better the psychological state of students. The purposes and principles of TSA should be explained to students. Support services should also be provided for students.

Publicity of TSA:

1. The EDB should strengthen publicity of TSA to enhance understanding of stakeholders (e.g. schools, parents and students), provide support for students in need and follow up with their learning situation. The arrangement of briefing session for Primary 1 parents should be taken as reference. Briefing and talks could be organised for parents and schools.

Opposing to the retention of TSA:

1. The existing implementation of TSA is not in line with its original intent. EDB exerts its control over schools by making use of TSA results. Parents do not trust the TSA review. TSA should therefore be abolished immediately.
2. The abilities of each student vary, so a uniformed TSA to assess the basic competencies of Primary 3 students is not appropriate.
3. Parents do not need TSA. Parents hope that EDB could release more time for children to be spent on parent-child bonding and suitable activities chosen by their parents.

Recommendations:

1. A Primary 4 student sat for TSA last year without drilling for it. EDB should seek to understand and review why such low-stakes assessment would cause so much opposition.
2. The EDB should re-build parents' confidence in TSA and review it to resolve problems related to TSA.
3. The existing format of TSA should be replaced by computer adaptive test allowing more flexibility for students to participate in the assessment. Numerous sets of TSA data have been accumulated over the past ten years. The data should be sufficient for EDB to estimate the results making it possible for TSA not to be implemented in traditional mode, which in fact imposes pressure on students.
4. If TSA is intended for assessing the basic competencies of students, item setters should be teachers teaching the weakest group of students.

Other views:

1. If the members of the moderation committee change every year, parents worry that new moderators may not be aware of the latest development and not be able to follow the recommendations in the report.
2. This district-based seminar for parents about TSA was a fake consultation. EDB has a presumption to continue the implementation of TSA.
3. The seminars organised by EDB came only as a result of pressure. They are merely "decorations".
4. The EDB should look into the root of the problems about TSA. Schools showed enthusiasm in joining some international assessments (e.g. PISA and TIMSS) but seldom did students reflect that they were under great pressure.
5. The promotional videos by EDB emphasised that TSA is not a measure of individual results and revision for TSA is therefore not necessary. The promotion of pragmatism in the videos is questionable.

Speakers' response:

1. The EDB would not exert pressure on schools by making use of the results of TSA. EDB has been working with schools as partners for the benefits of students.
2. The EDB has been implementing universal education, but not elite education.
3. TSA is a territory-wide assessment by its name and does not focus on performance of individual students. Further discussion on the validity of the sampling approach is necessary to see if enough information can be generated for schools and even the territory for improving learning and teaching and evaluating curriculum planning. Moreover, schools generally believe that implementing TSA by sampling is not a fair assessment method. Besides, the drilling problem cannot be rectified effectively.
4. The Committee on TSA would prudently consider comments from different stakeholders during the review process and balance concerns of all parties while taking the benefit of student learning as core value. A comprehensive review on the implementation of TSA would address issues like the culture of drilling and all alternatives such as assessment in alternate years, sampling and even the abolition of TSA. However, these suggestions require more professional discussions. EDB would announce the preliminary recommendations in late January or early February.
5. The Committee on TSA would prudently discuss the views collected from parents in the district-based seminars. A comprehensive review will be conducted on the implementation and design of TSA, etc.
6. TSA was reviewed in 2009, 2011 and 2013, and the reviews were followed with the implementation of some enhancement measures.
7. Question items of TSA are set by frontline teachers. The items set would be moderated by the Moderation Committee consisting of members from EDB, the HKEAA and frontline teachers.
8. The HKEAA is collecting comments on the level of difficulty of the items for further improvement.
9. There might be different items relating to a certain basic competency to assess students' performance from different angles. Teachers can then be provided with more information for their comprehensive consideration of improving student learning.
10. The EDB does not rule out the fact that individual teachers can step up training to prepare their students for TSA. EDB already issued circulars to schools last October and December respectively to reiterate the homework policy and remind schools to cease drilling for TSA.
11. Schools design and adjust the curriculum according to their school-based contexts. Therefore, the methods and levels of internal assessment are not consistent. The Government needs an objective and fair assessment to understand the basic

competencies of students so as to provide objective data for various stakeholders for evaluating the effectiveness of education policies.

12. Schools' internal assessments and TSA are two different tools for different purposes. TSA reports inform the attainment of basic competencies of a specific Key Stage, but internal assessments may not achieve the same purpose. The setting of the questions of internal assessments may also vary in accordance with learner diversity.
13. The EDB provides Web-based Learning and Teaching Support (WLTS). Schools and teachers can follow up according to assessment results for improving student learning.
14. TSA can provide information and analyses for schools' reference at the school level. Schools could identify the strengths and weaknesses of students to provide appropriate follow-up. Thus TSA should not be abolished simplistically. Otherwise an objective assessment tool would be lost. It may affect curriculum development and its dovetail with that in other countries in the long run.
15. The Basic Competency Assessment consists of TSA and Student Assessment (SA) in which assessment does not take the leading role. Students can make good use of the central assessment item bank in SA to improve learning. In view of the current problems related to TSA, it is worth reviewing the entire BCA design.
16. The difficulty encountered by SEN students taking part in TSA is certainly one of the agenda items for the Committee.
17. The EDB has been communicating with school sponsoring bodies and schools from time to time for improving TSA and increasing transparency. Publicity will be enhanced in the future.
18. The EDB is willing to listen to parents' comments. The operation of TSA will be reviewed and improved taking the interests of student learning as the core value.
19. Computer adaptive test is a relatively old assessment model. Instead, Cognitive Diagnostic Assessment is a more up-to-date assessment model. Cognitive Diagnostic Assessment requires more time for setting up an assessment bank and evaluating its effectiveness. However, this model can be considered in the long run.
20. The members of all Committees on TSA would serve for several years before their gradual replacement in stages in order to ensure continuity and smooth operation.
21. Frontline teachers would take part in various tasks related to TSA e.g designing items, moderating items, marking papers and conducting reviews etc. Around 1000 teachers who are responsible for marking duties of TSA are involved in writing up of the marking reports each year. The reports would be followed up by a separate working group and sent to the item setters of the subsequent year as reference.

District-based Seminars for Parents

Date:	19 January 2016 (Tuesday)
Time:	6:30-9:35 pm
Venue:	Lecture Theatre, 4/F, West Block, EDB Kowloon Tong Education Services Centre
Organiser:	Education Bureau

Summary

Implementation of the Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA):

1. Some students do not take TSA seriously because they know that no individual results will be released. Thus, TSA data may not be accurate.
2. According to information from the Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union, some TSA items cannot gauge students' basic competencies.

Administrative arrangements:

1. There are doubts about why students with special educational needs (SEN) have to participate in TSA, but no reports are available to show their results. Concerns about how TSA ties in with the needs of SEN students and hooks up to special education have been raised.
2. A vice principal in a secondary school claimed that he/she could deduce the students' results in Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination from the internal school-based assessment data. However, EDB cannot deduce the students' basic competencies from the internal school-based assessment data. The Committee should pay attention to and discuss the issue.
3. Since TSA items are part of the curriculum, TSA could be conducted on a sampling basis or in alternate years.
4. Teachers should be able to comprehend the students' standards without reference to TSA reports released in November or December.
5. Parents show concern about their rights to opt out their children of TSA.
6. There is an enquiry about when the TSA review will be completed.

Tricky questions, excessive items and lengthy texts:

1. TSA items are too difficult and deviate from students' life experiences, affecting students' learning motivation and confidence.
2. In English Language, the assessment focuses too much on grammar and the items are too difficult. Some parents pointed out that some assessment items cover the secondary education curriculum in the past.
3. In English Language, there were assessment items about traditional food for

Chinese festivals. While foreign parents familiar with Hong Kong culture found the questions difficult, non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students were unable to grasp the idea. The working committee for item setting should pay more attention to the issue.

4. TSA items focus too much on analytical skills, for example, Chinese 5W1H model, four prime sentences (time, venue, characters and incident) and causal sentence structures, but neglect vocabulary studies.
5. Students need to be familiar with the answering techniques for TSA items in Chinese and English Languages, for example, they have to read the comprehension questions first and then look for key words in the texts. The practice cannot enhance students' learning motivation but stifles their interest in reading.
6. Chinese classic texts for Primary 3 and Primary 6 students are too difficult and should be scrapped.
7. According to some Mathematics teachers at secondary schools, the Mathematics assessment items for Primary 3 were meaningful initially but they have become harder at a later stage which demanded applications of different abilities. There are doubts about how EDB monitors the quality of setting of TSA items.
8. The intent of TSA is not improper and assessments of similar nature are conducted in a number of countries. However, teachers in Hong Kong consider that TSA items are too difficult and unable to provide feedback to teaching and learning.

Over-drilling:

1. Since schools are concerned about the impact of TSA results, they intend to strengthen drilling of students for better results. However, students' learning should not be influenced by the competitions in the adult world.
2. Some secondary school teachers find that most students have deep impression of the TSA supplementary lessons at primary school level. The primary school teachers in contact are under the pressure from TSA. There should be a review of TSA supplementary lessons at secondary schools to see if the situation is as serious as that at primary schools or even worse.
3. What should be changed is not about modifications to the modes of assessment and its content, but the attitude towards drilling students.
4. After six years' drilling in TSA, Primary 6 graduates could not even complete a piece of simple English writing.
5. There is an enquiry as to whether EDB has the number of schools that over-drill students and give too much homework.
6. Drilling that is not excessive is acceptable. In fact, some parents arrange numerous tutorials for their children.

More demanding school-based assessment and curriculum:

1. English teachers focus training on one to two text types regularly found in TSA and neglect other significant text types.
2. Some parents pointed out that some English teachers instruct students to use the simple present tense but not the simple past tense to write a story since students are only required to learn the simple present tense at TSA Primary 3 level.
3. Some schools do not use TSA supplementary exercises but a large number of their worksheets cover TSA items.
4. Some Primary 3 students cannot complete their homework until 11 pm. They spend lots of time to memorise the knowledge but have no time to learn vocabulary.
5. Schools emphasise students' academic results and neglect the development of students in other fields.
6. A principal expressed that she understands the unfavourable conditions of parents and students and the pressure exerted on students in learning in recent years. The school at which she works now is trying to adjust the amount of homework for students to have more time to rest and relax.

Provision of support to schools and students:

1. The EDB, schools, parents and the public should enter into a partnership for knowledge providers to take different roles in the chain of knowledge supply. It is necessary to strengthen communication to facilitate students' learning.
2. The Web-based Learning and Teaching Support (WLTS) is not useful for teachers.
3. Teachers do not need question banks but exemplars about design of teaching scenario are required to support teaching.
4. There are doubts about the example given by the speaker on how the school attributed the decline of TSA results in a particular year to a few transfer students with moderate academic results.
5. There are doubts as to whether the officers launching school-based support programmes have any teaching experiences. Except pointing out the students' weaknesses mentioned in the TSA reports, the officers have not provided any support.

Publicity of TSA and home-school communication:

1. The positive message about TSA advocated by EDB cannot reach schools. Schools, teachers and students are all under pressure.
2. Many parents did not receive the information about the district-based seminars for parents. According to some parents' own records, about 29 schools did not inform parents about the seminars.
3. In some schools, parents are not aware of TSA until they are asked to buy TSA supplementary exercises for their Primary 3 children.

4. There is a need to avoid a confrontation between parents and schools.
5. Some parents have emailed EDB to enquire about the views collected from various district-based seminars for parents but EDB has not yet replied.
6. Some parents consider that the video about TSA does not reflect the reality. Under pressure from TSA, students are unable and have no time to enjoy the fun in learning.
7. Since many parents are acquainted with TSA, its details could be omitted at district-based seminars for parents.

Relationship between internal school-based assessment and TSA:

1. The curriculum guide of EDB is set out with reference to students' abilities. EDB should trust that teachers have the professional competence to teach and assess students.
2. Students' results of the internal school-based assessments could be used to monitor schools. Meanwhile, items may not necessarily be set by EDB. Schools could conduct the assessments and report the data.

Support to the retention of TSA:

1. Some primary school principals recognise TSA as one of the assessment tools to provide data. Subject panel chairpersons of Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics at schools can analyse and apply TSA data effectively to help students improve learning and proceed to secondary schools.

Opposing to the retention of TSA:

1. According to parents' own statistics, about 70% of attendees of the district-based seminars for parents support the abolition of TSA.
2. About 30 to 40 attendees support the abolition of TSA by a show of hands at the seminar.

Other questions and views:

1. A vocabulary list is not available for the Primary 3 Chinese Language.
2. With too much focus on academic results, some students have mental and emotional problems that require treatment.
3. Cultivation of virtues is neglected, such as teaching students to give seats to people in need.
4. As the speaker mentioned that students might avoid becoming inadvertent in learning by reflecting on their performance, there were enquiries as to what could be done to help students in this regard and what an eight-year-old child had to learn.
5. As the speaker mentioned that some schools promoted parent-child reading to improve students' reading abilities, there were enquiries as if pressure on parents

was taken into account in adopting such a practice and if such a practice was applicable to those students who were not taken care by parents.

6. There are queries about why teachers have not mentioned the problems of TSA until now.
7. There is an enquiry as to how the public can know about the views collected from the district-based seminars for parents.

Speaker's response:

1. Parents' views collected from the district-based seminars for parents will be passed to the Committee for consideration.
2. The notice about details of the district-based seminars on TSA for parents has been issued to all primary schools in the territory. Individual schools follow their usual practices to inform parents, for example, via Parent Teacher Associations, online notices or letters to parents.
3. Since communication with parents is inadequate, a review will be conducted and transparency and information flow will be enhanced. Currently, more TSA information is available on television, newspapers and leaflets. Parents are welcome to contact EDB for more information. EDB is willing to listen to parents' views and review and improve the implementation of TSA in the best interests of students.
4. Since different schools design tasks and determine the quantity of homework on the basis of students' abilities, it is difficult to make an objective comparison between "the time for homework" and "the time for learning". EDB recommends that schools should be provided with greater autonomy to devise their own homework policy suitable for the students.
5. Schools may arrange supplementary lessons based on various reasons, for example, providing enrichment or remedial support to cater for students with diverse educational needs. Such lessons may not necessarily be arranged for TSA. Parents with doubts could approach schools for more details.
6. Though TSA does not have reports for individual students, it provides schools with data of the overall performance of students, which help schools identify students' overall difficulties, strengths and weaknesses, so that schools can provide timely feedback for students and adjust the curriculum and teaching arrangements.
7. In the 2014/15 school year, there were 280 primary schools in the territory (around 500 primary schools in Hong Kong) participating in EDB's School-based Support Scheme on a voluntary basis, which covered the three subjects of Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics.
8. The EDB understands that teachers are under stress and appreciates their comments. In addition to the teaching materials on the WLTS website, EDB will consider providing other teaching resources for teachers' reference.

9. Internal school assessments and TSA are different tools but they are not incompatible. Since schools design and adjust the curriculum based on schools' situations, the modes and standards of the assessments are not aligned. Internal school assessment items may vary owing to learner diversity. The Government needs to have a grasp of students' basic competencies through an objective and fair assessment, and to provide objective data to different stakeholders for reviewing the effectiveness of education policy.
10. The correct response rates in the TSA reports are provided for teachers' reference so that they can reflect on teaching and learning and enhance the curriculum development. Schools are not required to attain the goal of achieving 100% correct response rates.
11. As to whether parents should have the discretion to opt in or opt out their children of TSA, EDB has pledged to reflect the opinion to the Committee
12. In conducting the review of TSA, the Committee will consider the views of various stakeholders, balance the concerns of different sectors and act in the best interests of students. A comprehensive review of the implementation of TSA will be carried out and all possible proposals will be deliberated. The Committee does not have a presumed position and no final decision has yet been made. It is hoped that the public will provide room for professional discussion. EDB expects to announce the preliminary recommendations in early February.
13. The purpose of tests or examinations is to help students to learn. TSA provides assessment data for schools to understand if their students have acquired basic competences of the current key learning stage so as to facilitate their learning at the next key learning stage. Since not all parents know how or have time to help their children attain basic competencies, TSA could serve in the system to provide appropriate support for students.
14. Internal school assessments and TSA provide schools with the overall assessment data, helping schools render support to students in light of their strengths and weaknesses and take follow-up action as appropriate.
15. The process of setting and reviewing TSA items is professional and stringent. It is quite difficult to request teachers to set quality TSA items.
16. The mock TSA items attempted by some legislators are designed by publishers. They are not the real TSA items. Nevertheless, EDB will continue reviewing and improving the design of assessment items, adjusting the levels of difficulty and exploring ways to tie in with students' learning interests, so as to balance the expectations of different sectors.
17. There are deviations in the implementation of TSA, which should be reviewed and adjusted.
18. The EDB encourages the SEN students to participate in TSA and special arrangements are made for them. The arrangements are the same as those for public examinations, such as extension of assessment time, and use of enlarged

papers, coloured papers, single-sided papers and Braille scripts. Schools may contact HKEAA when necessary.

19. The current TSA data do not cover the results of SEN students. The Committee may consider if there is a need to incorporate the relevant information in future.
20. The Committee will thoroughly discuss parents' views collected from the district-based seminars for parents, and will conduct a full review of the implementation and design of TSA and so forth.
21. The difficulties faced by SEN and NCS students in TSA and the special arrangements are also the major concerns of the Committee.
22. It is hoped that the confidence of parents and schools in EDB will be rebuilt, the mutual trust among them will be fostered, and a partnership will be established with the learning of students as the core.

TSA Concern Group

Date: 27 January 2016 (Wednesday)
Time: 12:00-1:00 pm
Venue: Room 1111, 11/F, East Wing, Central Government Offices
Organiser: Education Bureau

Summary

Views of parent group on the arrangement of ‘District-based Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA) Seminars for Parents’:

1. Based on what is known, parents from 29 schools did not receive any information about enrollment for the ‘District-based Seminars for Parents’. Only few people participated in the seminar on January 19. Parents enquired about how the Education Bureau (EDB) had disseminated the related information to schools.
2. A number of parents reflected in the seminar that the items were beyond basic competencies.
3. A number of people voted in support of the abolition of TSA.
4. Parents enquired about the way to ensure that all information could be recorded and the channel to access views of participants from different seminars.
5. The Concern Group expressed that they could not represent all parents. EDB should collect views from other parents.

Views on the 2016 sampling arrangement mentioned in newspapers:

1. The EDB was required to clarify information in newspapers. Parents want to know if they have a choice in participating in TSA. Parents and students will feel the pressure and fear of being labelled if they are required to indicate to schools their decisions.
2. In spite of the sampling method to be adopted, the learning, teaching and assessment is still oriented towards TSA.
3. The need for Tryout Study is recognised. It should not be hastily implemented lest the effectiveness of the results would be affected. The directions for the review should not be limited to that for question types and administration. It was recommended that the tryout study be postponed to 2017.
4. More consideration should be given to the views from principals, frontline teachers and parents. It was considered inadequate to have only one parent representative, TONG Sau-chai, in the Coordinating Committee on Basic Competency Assessment and Assessment Literacy.

Views on TSA:

1. The meaning of TSA for students is not understood. The support at the level of parents is inevident.
2. There is no objection to striving for quality education. However, the current implementation of TSA is not in line with its purpose. Much discrepancy is observed between the ideal and real situation. The problem of drilling for TSA in school remains in existence.
3. Parents enquired about the way EDB would bridge the gap between the level of difficulty of the exercises from the publishers and that of TSA.
4. TSA assesses the effect of drilling and students' test-taking skills rather than basic competencies.
5. Teachers could identify the students with underachieving performance from daily teaching and internal school assessments.
6. Parents enquired about the number of schools having received support service over the past 3 years.
7. The Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union has conducted a survey on TSA receiving overall negative feedback. EDB should conduct a survey on related issues concerned for teachers as well.
8. Parents enquired if TSA would promote comparisons among schools.
9. There is no choice for students not attaining basic competencies. It is unfair to set uniform standards.
10. Related views from parents submitted to schools have not been followed up.
11. Discrepancy between views collected by the Concern Group and those of EDB was noted. Schools and teachers do not dare to express their views.

Parents' final remarks:

1. The use of TSA data and the support from EDB for schools and students is considered unclear.
2. Parents should have the rights to choose to take part in TSA or not.
3. Suspension of 2016 TSA is requested. TSA should be abolished in the long run.

Response from EDB:

1. Regarding the dissemination of information about 'District-based Seminars for Parents', the School Development Division of EDB faxed the information concerned to all government, subsidised and private primary schools in Hong Kong. Individual schools informed parents according to their school-based practices at their discretion. For example, information can be disseminated via written notices, representatives of Parent Teacher Associations or the schools' online notices, etc. As for the publicity arrangement about the seminar for the public on 19 January 2016, EDB issued a press release to announce the information and the enrollment details.

2. For the support measures, in the 2014/15 school year, about 360 primary schools in Hong Kong received the School-based Support Services. 280 schools among the number accepted the related support services for Chinese language, English Language and Mathematics.
3. At present, the final recommendations have yet to be made pending the outcome of review. The Committee is initially inclined towards inviting a school rather than an individual student as a unit. As such, parents are not involved in the selection process. As for the tryout, scheduling the arrangement as early as in 2016 allows for early results for reference of the long-term review.
4. Communication between different stakeholders is needed.
5. The EDB promotes sharing of good exemplars among schools on a continual basis.

Federation of Parent-Teacher Associations of 18 Districts

Date: 1 February 2016 (Monday)
Time: 5:00-6:30 pm
Venue: Room 1112, 11/F, East Wing, Central Government Offices
Organiser: Education Bureau

Summary

Views from representatives from the Federation of Parent-Teacher Associations of 18 districts:

Implementation of Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA):

1. For good schools, the overall performance imposes no pressure on them; for schools with unsatisfactory results, the performance is intended to be a demonstration of schools' efforts.

Tricky questions, excessive items and lengthy texts:

1. In the tryout study, there will be modification and the public should be informed of the change.
2. Basically parents would not oppose to the proposed changes, but the Education Bureau (EDB) should keep parents informed of the real situation.
3. Some students considered the Chinese Language Listening paper quite difficult. Students are to answer questions requiring thinking after listening once only. At present, Chinese is mostly conducted in Putonghua at Primary 3. Students found the pace of Cantonese fast.
4. Some ethnic minority groups reflected the need to avoid questions related to traditional food for Chinese festivals in the English Language paper. Students misunderstood 'Peking duck', for example, as the name of a kind of ducks.

Publicity of TSA:

1. The EDB should brief the public clearly on the purpose of TSA and the use of data. Parents should be acquainted with how the data benefit their children, provide feedback for learning and enhance a smooth transition to the secondary level; hence relieving parents of their concerns.
2. The public should be informed that students participating in the assessment are not identified individually. EDB notes the overall standards of schools for gauging the territory-wide level.
3. Regardless of the principals' explanations to parents about the benefits of the

TSA data, parents were not convinced. It is hoped that EDB could clearly explain to parents what TSA is.

4. There should be more and straightforward publicity work for parents.

Support to the retention of TSA:

1. If there is no TSA, parents will arrange other supplementary exercises related to assessments for students.
2. In activities held earlier in Kwun Tong district each with attendance of 200 to 300 parents, a simple survey was conducted. No parents with children to be promoted to primary school are opposed to TSA. Only 5 parents with children to be promoted to secondary schools are opposed to TSA reflecting that majority are not.
3. Parents who are doubly non-permanent residents in the Northern District reflected that without TSA, they would not know the school levels to facilitate selection of schools.

Recommendations:

1. Transparency should be enhanced to acquaint the public with the overall adjustment and enable them to understand the applications concerned.
2. Some attendees suggested participation of schools on a voluntary basis while others suggested participation of all schools to be fair and the need for respecting the system demonstrating better credibility and validity.
3. The EDB should provide support for students with special educational needs.
4. The EDB should educate parents about the value of each school.

Other views:

1. Parents have confused examinations with TSA. Supplementary exercises for examinations have been mistaken for as TSA exercises.
2. There is an urge for seminars introducing learning resources concerned.
3. Some parents expressed dissatisfaction with the whole primary education curriculum and attributed it to TSA. Some representatives pointed out that the level of difficulty of internal school assessment items about current affairs such as European refugees far exceeded the primary levels.
4. In the tryout study, 10% of the schools (about 50 numbers) are to be invited to take part in the assessment. Parents enquired if participation would involve the whole year level of students. Some attendees expressed doubt about the level of representation. Some schools have enquired if they can participate without invitation.

Response from EDB:

1. The EDB would enhance transparency and strengthen communication with

different sectors.

2. The TSA data enable teachers to understand their students' attainment of basic competencies and their learning needs so as to adapt pedagogy for enhancement of student learning.
3. The whole year level of students of the schools receiving invitation will participate in the tryout study as a unit. The practice aims at covering students from different backgrounds to strengthen the level of representation. Participation of 5000 students is enough to establish reliability and validity. Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority can make use of the data in the past for reference and statistics. For participants in TSA, there will be support measures such as workshops for parents, etc.

Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union

Date: 2 February 2016 (Tuesday)
Time: 5:35-7:20 pm
Venue: Room 603, East Wing, Central Government Offices
Organiser: Education Bureau

Summary

Views on the 2016 tryout study:

1. The direction for the enhancement of the Territory-wide Assessment (TSA) proposed by the Coordinating Committee on Basic Competency Assessment and Assessment Literacy is recognised. The current adjustments on the level of difficulty of the assessment items and the reduced number of assessment items are considered to be able to relieve the drilling problem in the short run and address various concerns of the public towards TSA.
2. The proposed suspension of TSA at Primary 3 is considered the most appropriate and the issue of minimising students' drilling practice is considered the most important.
3. The level of representation of schools is considered questionable when school participation in the 2016 tryout study is made voluntary. The different ways of sampling schools can also result in errors in data.
4. Schools making decision on participating in the tryout without consulting parents can cause problems. There is concern about schools torn between school sponsoring bodies and parents.
5. It is believed that more students will attain basic competencies after adjustments are made to the TSA items. There is concern that the tryout study may not resolve the drilling problem. Under the condition that over half of the schools participate on a voluntary basis, the tryout may fall short of the expectation of the public.
6. The follow-up measures for the tryout study are of concern.
7. The 2016 tryout study may not resolve all the issues. The Education Bureau (EDB) is expected to bring a positive change to the situation.
8. Some attendees recognise that the tryout study has included a package of support measures. The utility rate of the online platform involved has been low and it is not as user-friendly as the supplementary teaching resources prepared by the publishers.

Views on TSA and assignments:

1. With TSA being distorted across the years, there has been an increase in homework load. The learning motivation of Primary 3 students is affected.
2. There is too much homework currently in addition to TSA. Working parents have to supervise their children's assignments after returning home from work. It is the source of stress. In the long run, reducing the amount of homework is considered the solution to current problems.
3. TSA results in the problem of distortion and leads to the increase in the amount of assignments.
4. In response to more restrictive marking criteria, there is vocabulary assignment for Mathematics. Teachers put too much attention on TSA in Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics.
5. A research study on TSA is being conducted currently to find out the real problems behind. The organisation supports collaboration with EDB.
6. The EDB is urged to abolish TSA or change the name.

Penalty and application of the data:

1. The pressure related to TSA can be attributable to the way data is interpreted by EDB, Incorporated Management Committees and school sponsoring bodies. EDB is expected to communicate with the school sponsoring bodies to avoid exerting pressure on schools with reference to the reports as it may result in drilling.
2. There have been EDB officers who criticised schools with reference to the unsatisfactory TSA data. They even requested to amend the question types in internal school assessments to tie with TSA.
3. The TSA data are not considered helpful for outstanding school. They can only be a tool for the school sponsoring bodies to suppress the weak schools.
4. There is limited understanding of the way TSA data are used and it causes suspicion and worries.
5. There is concern about EDB obtaining student performance data in TSA having an impact on students' privacy.

Response from EDB:

1. One of the purposes of the tryout study is to collect views from stakeholders and more information on improving TSA.
2. Under the same standard, the easy items may not necessary enable more students to attain the level.
3. The 2016 tryout study cannot resolve the problem of excessive homework and some medium and long-term measures are required. The existing Committee would not be resolved. It would further discuss the later proposals.
4. The 2016 tryout study allows schools to choose reports in different formats to

relieve pressure.

5. After the 2016 tryout study, the information and feedback collected would be used for further enhancing TSA. TSA would be carried out again in 2017.
6. The data collected from HKEAA involves no information about individual students. The information concerned is used only for analysis to formulate policies and support measures.
7. If majority of parents at school raise objection, EDB will invite other schools as replacements while maintaining the representation of 50 schools
8. To improve the stakeholders' understanding of the stakes involved in TSA, EDB has launched a series of measures and would remove items related to TSA from the 'Overview of Key Performance Measures Items'.
9. As far as the use of the TSA data is concerned, EDB would set out internal guidelines for staff to make good use of the data to help schools.

Summary of Written Submissions from the public

Use of the Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA) data:

1. Some school sponsoring bodies rank the schools under their supervision on the basis of the data from the TSA school reports, showing that there are deviations in the functions of TSA. There are doubts as to how the Education Bureau (EDB) makes use of the TSA data over the years and whether the data use is in line with the goals of the education reform.
2. The school results of TSA released cover the correct response rates of each dimension at the territory-wide level and the school level, creating competition and comparison among schools and exacerbating the drilling problem.
3. If TSA is to gather students' attainment rates in basic competencies, two grades, "pass" and "fail", will suffice. However, take the writing paper of Chinese Language as an example, there are five grades for the assessment, raising doubts as to whether EDB intends to collect data other than the attainment rates.
4. The nature of TSA has turned from facilitating "assessment for learning" to "teaching for assessment". EDB uses the TSA data to assess the performance of schools, and the school management monitor the performance of principals and teachers by means of TSA because they are worried that TSA results may lead to comparison among schools and the closure of schools.

Engagement of different stakeholders:

1. Teachers and parents should be consulted.
2. People holding different views, including parent representatives of minority groups, should be invited to join the Coordinating Committee on Basic Competency Assessment and Assessment Literacy and its two working groups to enhance representativeness of membership and to adequately reflect the views of different stakeholders.

Tricky questions, excessive items and lengthy texts:

1. The assessment items are beyond the scope of learning dimensions and becoming more and more difficult. Some consider that it is difficult to understand the items and the assessment has exceeded the basic competencies of students. It has serious impacts on the mental development of Primary 3 students who are only under the age of 10.
2. To tackle difficult items, teachers have to further drill their students for TSA, resulting in a vicious cycle of more preparatory work followed by more difficult items.

3. Internal assessments for Primary 1 Chinese and English Languages cover reading, listening and speaking parts. The attention span of children at the age of 6 or 7 can only last for 30 minutes but the duration of the listening and reading assessment is about 60 minutes.
4. For the Chinese Language reading assessment, the total number of words in the texts has increased from about 700 at the initial stage to around 1 500. The increase in word count is beyond the basic competencies of students.

Over-drilling:

1. Teaching has been turned into drilling.
2. Primary school students have become “examination machines”. Additional homework, drilling and supplementary lessons as preparation for TSA affect students’ time for rest and participation in other activities, and even their family life. Students may lose their motivation and interest to learn, which will hinder their mental development, and even cause mental problems and suicidal tendency in the worst cases.
3. Parents have to accompany children to drill for TSA.
4. Some primary schools start drilling students in examination techniques for TSA from Primary 1.
5. Although EDB always stresses that TSA is a low-stakes assessment and drilling is unnecessary, quite a number of schools still arrange supplementary lessons to drill their students mechanically. While professional judgment of schools should be respected based on the principle of school-based management, it shows that EDB fails to tackle the drilling problem.

Excessive lesson time:

1. Compulsory whole-day primary schooling is opposed. Its initial purpose is for students to complete their homework in school for participation in other activities. However, at present, students end up having to attend more and more lessons.
2. The majority of students have to spend two or three hours to finish their homework at home every day. With the eight to nine hours of lesson time at schools, students basically “learn” for 10 to 12 hours per day. Besides, the time for lunch and recess is becoming shorter and shorter. The problem of excessive lesson time for primary school students is indeed very serious.

More demanding school-based assessment and curriculum:

1. The curriculum has become TSA-oriented. TSA items have been incorporated into the school-based curriculum and distorted the original one.
2. As compared with the school curriculum in 1970s’ and 1980s’, the depth and width of the current curriculum have multiplied.

3. As for the two public examinations for Primary 6 students, i.e. TSA and Pre-Secondary One Hong Kong Attainment Test, since their modes and directions are different, teaching and learning at schools may be affected.

Support for schools and students:

1. Since the support rendered by schools and EDB for the students below the basic competency levels is not sufficient, professional tutors should be sent to arrange remedial courses for such students.

Publicity of TSA:

1. Due to insufficient information provided by schools and EDB, parents have some misunderstandings about TSA, perceiving it as a public examination that will affect further studies of their children.

Support to the retention of TSA:

1. There are views that support the implementation of TSA at Primary 6 and Secondary 3 levels because EDB has to know about the teaching practices as well as the levels of students at primary and secondary schools. While there is a need for retaining TSA, a comprehensive review should be conducted to gauge the views of different stakeholders and to make appropriate modifications to the relevant arrangements so that TSA can serve its original functions.
2. For any education system, an objective tool should be put in place to evaluate students' performances. It is proposed that a clear syllabus or a list of specified reference books should be drawn up for the assessment.
3. TSA is objectively fine. The problems are attributable to drilling at schools. As such, schools should first understand the intent of TSA and should not drill their students anymore.
4. Like a medical consultation, TSA serves to diagnose and identify students' problems in a timely manner.
5. There are views that fully acknowledge TSA. Yet, TSA should be able to maintain the quality of teaching and cater for learner diversity. Without TSA, there may be a risk of the deterioration of quality education. If there are only internal assessments at schools, EDB may need to monitor the quality of education by randomly checking the school papers. Under these circumstances, the pressure on teachers will be greatly intensifying.
6. Since the levels of Hong Kong students are plummeting, examinations should not be cancelled and the quantity of homework should not be reduced. Students do not have enough time to do homework just because parents arrange too many extra-curricular courses for their children.

Opposing to the retention of TSA:

1. There are views that request for the abolition of Primary 3 TSA to let students really derive pleasure from learning and reading.
2. Primary 3 TSA should be permanently scrapped, and a review of Primary 6 and Secondary 3 TSAs should be conducted. If it is not possible to solve drilling and deviation problems arising from TSA, decisive action should be taken to scrap TSA at all levels scrapped.
3. TSA should be scrapped, and the information technology in education should be developed so that students' proficiency in Chinese and English will be increased by more extensive reading and their interest in learning will be stimulated.

Recommendations:

1. There should be different proposals for the retention or abolition of TSA, including scrapping TSA at all levels, scrapping Primary 3, Primary 6 or Secondary 3 TSA, suspending Primary 3 TSA or suspending it for one year, and conducting TSA at Primary 4 or Primary 6.
2. Schools should have the options of either undertaking TSA or conducting internal assessments.
3. Students should be instructed to finish all homework at schools or the homework load should be minimised.
4. EDB should unify the assessment standards and clearly stipulate the requirements. The items should align with the levels of students for the assessment and evaluation of their performance.
5. EDB should be resolute in implementing the policy and reform to put an end to over-drilling practices. There should be a complaint mechanism for parents to report cases of over-drilling and for EDB to directly intervene to punish schools with over-drilling practices.
6. EDB should monitor primary schools with whole-day schooling, requiring them to arrange a one-hour tutorial per day for students to finish their homework.
7. The EDB should conduct surveys on the quantity of homework, tests and examinations of different types of schools, with a view to minimising the time for doing homework. Students' leisure and family time should be taken into account to strike a balance between learning and leisure.
8. As for schools with unsatisfactory performance in TSA, EDB should allocate more resources for provision of support, step up its monitoring and lessen their autonomy to avoid the abuse of resources.
9. The marking scheme of TSA should be adjusted, taking into account the impact of drilling.
10. Data may be collected through the inspection system or on a sampling basis to determine the quantity of resources to be given.

11. A proportion of Primary 3 students could be selected randomly to participate in TSA. Those who have already undertaken Primary 3 TSA are not required to participate in Primary 6 or Secondary 3 TSA.
12. The EDB should allow parents and students to participate in TSA on a voluntary basis so that they will not put the blame on EDB and schools.
13. The indicators for “maximum learning hours” or “maximum hours for staying at school” may be developed to monitor schools effectively.
14. No drilling should be allowed but students may get acquainted with the modes of assessment two weeks before the examination.
15. The school reports should only cover the correct response rates of a school, and the territory-wide correct response rates should not be shown. Schools may make a comparison of its own results over the past years.

Other views:

1. TSA is in grave breach of the EDB Primary Education Curriculum policy and Article 29(a) of the United Nations “Convention on the Rights of the Child”: the education of the child shall be directed to “the development of the child’s personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential.”
2. The EDB should not shirk its responsibility to school sponsoring bodies, schools and parents.
3. The issues on TSA not only reflect the problem of an assessment system, but also wider and more deep-seated issues concerning the vision and thinking of the education leaders and the whole education system. Currently, the establishment and implementation of the education policy are bound by assessment, and, the assessment literacy is lacking and distorted.
4. For the students with normal intelligence but special educational needs who study at government or aided schools, Primary 3 TSA is no easy task in terms of the levels of difficult and drilling. That will undermine their self-confidence, evoking the feeling of inferiority and negative thinking.

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Existing Primary 3 Oral Assessment of Territory-wide System Assessment

The oral assessments for Chinese Language and English Language are currently conducted over two days. It is conducted at Primary 3 (P3) over two days in early May and Primary 6 (P6) in mid May. Students take part in one session (either AM or PM) of the oral and CAV assessments. For Secondary 3 (S3), the oral assessment is conducted over two days but in one session (either AM or PM) in April.

Depending on the number of students of the secondary or primary school, 12 or 24 students are randomly selected to take part in the oral assessments for each language. The list of students selected for the assessment is not revealed until on the day of the assessment. S3 students are assessed by two external Oral Examiners (OEs) while P3 and P6 students are assessed by one internal and one external OE. An Assessment Administration Assistant (AAA) is sent to each school on the day of the oral assessments to provide administrative support.

Following the practice in previous years, training is provided to OEs by the HKEAA. Teachers with prior experience as OEs are invited to take part in the Online Oral Training Workshop held in March. Teachers without prior experience, or not having completed the online training workshop, are required to attend the OE Training Workshop conducted in March or April for primary and secondary OEs respectively. In order to ensure the quality of OEs, the HKEAA appointed more than 30 Assistant Examiners to assist in the training.

The format of the OE Training Workshop is a briefing followed by a small group discussion and activity. Through participation in a mock assessment, participants are able to familiarise themselves with the marking schemes, administrative procedures and skills required to conduct the oral assessments. Once the participants pass the mock assessment, they are appointed as OEs by the HKEAA.

Existing Primary 3 Written Assessment of Territory-wide System Assessment

Written assessments for Primary 3, Primary 6 and Secondary 3 students are currently conducted in June. Invigilation is carried out by teachers at their own schools, supported by Assessment Administration Assistants appointed by the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) in the conduct of the written assessments. The allocation of sub-papers is highlighted in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Allocation of Sub-Papers to Students

Chinese Language	
Reading	• P3, P6 and S3 students are randomly allocated one of three sub-papers
Writing	• Students at P3 are randomly allocated one of two sub-papers, P6 one of four sub-papers and S3 one of three sub-papers
Listening Speaking	• Each class is randomly allocated one of two sub-papers
Chinese Audio-visual (CAV)	• Randomly select P3 and P6 students allocated one of 12 sub-papers and S3 students one of 16 sub-papers
	• Randomly select P3 and P6 students allocated one of two sub-papers and each class at S3 is allocated one paper
English Language	
Reading and Writing	• P3, P6 and S3 students are randomly allocated one of three sub-papers
Listening Speaking	• Each class is randomly allocated one of three sub-papers
	• Randomly select P3 and P6 students allocated one of 12 sub-papers and S3 students one of 16 sub-papers
Mathematics	• Students randomly allocated one of four sub-papers

Support Measures for Students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Non-Chinese Speaking (NCS) Students

Given that the TSA is a low-stakes assessment which serves as an assessment tool for schools to enhance learning and teaching, we strongly encourage all students to take part in it. Therefore, the Education Bureau and the HKEAA have provided various support measures to accommodate the needs of students with special educational needs (SEN) and non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students in attempting the TSA.

For the SEN students, the measures included the following:

1. Use of coloured paper (i.e. green) and single-paged printing of question papers for the SEN students upon request from schools; and

2. Students with visual disabilities can choose Braille scripts or use screen readers to answer questions. For those who use screen readers, encrypted 'WORD' files in Chinese Language and English Language are delivered to schools by the HKEAA on the days of assessment.

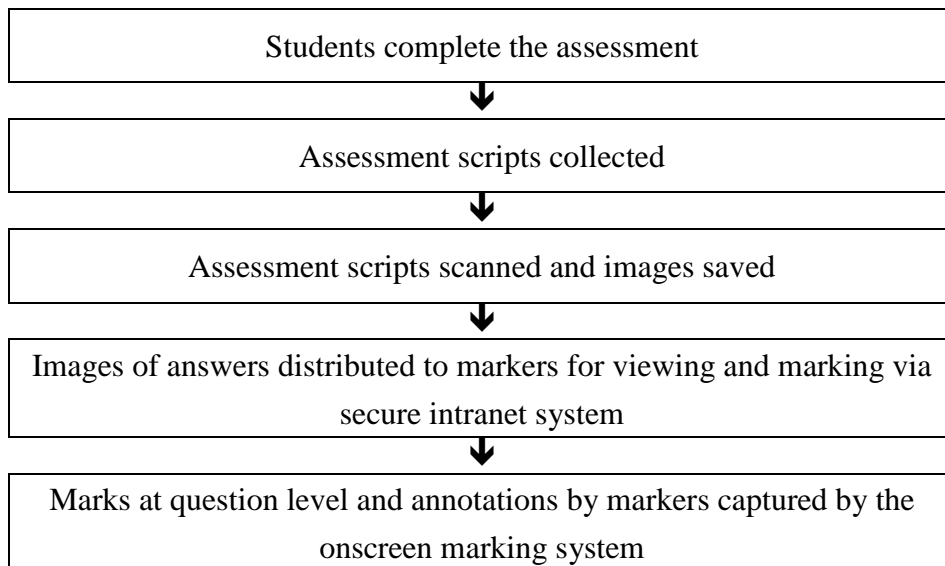
For the NCS students, measures for their participation in the Chinese Language component of TSA are as follows:

1. A bilingual version of 'Instructions to Students' is provided in the form of a supplementary sheet in Reading, Writing, Listening and CAV assessments to enable NCS students to better understand the requirements for answering questions;
2. For the Listening assessment, schools are able to use a special version of the CD (with all the questions and answer options read aloud) for NCS students as needed; and
3. An instruction sheet with further information specifying the answering requirements for the Chinese Reading assessment is distributed to the invigilators who can read out the answering requirements to NCS students as needed before the assessment starts. This ensures the NCS students understand the answering requirements.

Marking and Check-marking – Onscreen Marking System

Starting from 2008, Onscreen Marking (OSM) is adopted for the marking of TSA papers.

OSM is a computerised marking system. Barcodes are used to track a student's identity and his/her assessment script. Each script is scanned into a computer and the images captured and retained for marking and recordkeeping. The system delivers electronic images of students' scripts to markers at the six assessment centres (Che Kung Temple, Fortress Hill, Lai King, Sai Ying Pun, San Po Kong and Tsuen Wan). The workflow of OSM is shown in the table below.



All the Markers and Assistant Examiners are qualified serving teachers. Attainment of the Language Proficiency Assessment for Teachers (LPAT) in English is one of the requirements for English Language Markers and Assistant Examiners. Markers' Meetings for Primary 3, Primary 6 and Secondary 3 are conducted in July to familiarise Markers with the marking schemes. Additional training workshops are provided for training on the functionality of OSM in order to ensure the smooth implementation of OSM.

OSM not only enhances the marking quality but also improves the efficiency of the marking process. Distribution of scripts for double marking is rapidly achieved through OSM. Consistency in marking is ensured as scripts with discrepancies over the allowed range between two markers' scores are automatically distributed to the Assistant Examiners for third marking. During the marking period, the Assistant Examiners monitor the performance of Markers by check-marking the scripts randomly. Subject managers and officers of the HKEAA also closely monitor the marking process. If there is any inconsistency in marking, prompt actions are taken to rectify the discrepancies.

Existing Territory-wide System Assessment School Reports

As announced by the Education Bureau in April 2014, no Basic Competency (BC) attainment rates in the three subjects will be provided to primary schools starting from that year. Primary school reports only include the data for each dimension/skill by sub-paper. However, the content of the school reports for secondary schools remains unchanged and the same as that of previous years. There are two categories of reports provided to schools: school reports (no BC attainment data given to primary schools) and item analysis reports. Two TSA ‘Supplementary Reports’ will be made available for schools. These ‘Supplementary Reports’ exclude the performance data of students with different learning needs and those with special educational needs. None of the reports identify the performance of individual students and all reports are strictly confidential, provided only to the school.

Given that each student only responded to certain assessment items in the TSA, it is not appropriate to report the number and percentage attaining BC for each dimension/skill. Instead, the overall numbers and percentages for all three subjects are provided as these are much more reliable. In addition, there are reports setting out the school average scores and school average versus territory-wide average (as percentages of maximum scores) for each dimension/skill. In Mathematics, the dimensions include Number, Measures, Shape & Space and Data Handling in P3, and in addition to Algebra in Primary 6 and Secondary 3. In Chinese Language and English Language, the skills include reading, writing, listening and speaking.

Item analysis reports provide detailed data on the strengths and weaknesses of students and indicate the percentages of student responses to each item. There are two types of Item Analysis reports. The first type lists the items in the sequence in which they appear in each of the sub-papers. The second type lists the items as sorted by BCs.

In 2014, the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) developed Phase 1 of an Interactive Online Item Analysis Report. Teachers can login to the system and view the item data, items of each sub-paper and marking scheme. This facilitates teachers’ analysis of students’ performances. Phase 2 was launched in 2015, with a view to further facilitating rapid analysis of students’ performances. As well as viewing the sub-papers and marking schemes using ‘click-on’ functions on the item analysis interface, teachers can view each individual

item paired with its model answer. Moreover, the HKEAA provided student performance figures over the past three years on each BC / question intent / learning unit so as to enable schools to better understand their students' learning.

Comparison on Different Schemes

		Eliminate the incentives of over-drilling	Provide Government objective data for reference	Provide feedback for learning and teaching
TSA Cycles	Abolition of P3 TSA	Maybe	×	×
	Suspension of P3 TSA for 1 year	Maybe	×	×
	Conducting TSA annually (Enhancement and adjustment)	Maybe	✓	✓
	TSA in alternate years (Conducting in even-number years or odd-number years)	×	✓	✓
Random Sampling	School as sampling unit	×	✓	✓ (Only available to participating schools)
	Student as sampling unit	×	✓	×
	Single-subject assessment on three-year cycle	×	✓	✓ (Feedback for one subject each year)
TSA Reports	Reports for Government (with school names) and schools	×	✓	✓
	Data for Government (without school names) No report for schools	✓	✓	×
	Data for Government (without school names) Reports for schools	Maybe	✓	✓
	Data for Government (without school names) Reports for schools and parents / students	×	✓	✓
Others	TSA at Primary 4	×	✓	✓

✓ Can × Cannot

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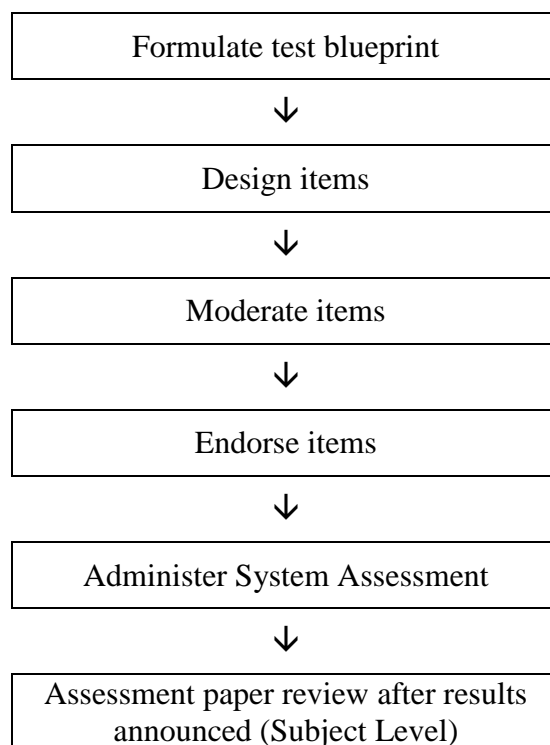
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Flowchart of the formulation of Primary 3 TSA papers**Arrangements of P3 TSA for Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics****Compositions of Papers and Distributions of Items**Chinese Language

Reading Assessment

Sub-Papers Description	Text Type	No. of Texts	No. of Items	Question Type
3CR1	Narrative	2	20-23	Blank filling 、 Multiple choice 、 Short answers 、 Ordering
	Practical writing	1		Multiple choice 、 Short answers
3CR2	Narrative	2	20-23	Blank filling 、 Multiple choice 、 Short answers 、 Ordering
	Practical writing	1		Multiple choice 、 Short answers
3CR3	Narrative	2	20-23	Blank filling 、 Multiple choice 、 Short answers 、 Ordering
	Practical writing	1		Multiple choice 、 Short answers

Writing Assessment

Sub-Papers Description	Question Type	No. of Items
3CW1	Practical writing	1
	Short writing	1
3CW2	Practical writing	1
	Short writing	1

Listening Assessment

Sub-Papers Description	No. of Items	Question Type
3CL1	Around 15	Multiple choice
3CL2	Around 15	Multiple choice

Speaking Assessment

Task Description	No. of Items	Way of Assessment
3CSP01 、3CSP02 、 3CSP03 、3CSP04 、 3CSP05 、3CSP06	6	Picture Description
3CSG01 、3CSG02 、 3CSG03 、3CSG04 、 3CSG05 、3CSG06	6	Group Discussion

Chinses Audio-visual Assessment

Sub-Papers Description	No. of Items	Question Type
3CAV1	13	Multiple choice
3CAV2	13	Multiple choice

English Language

Reading and writing Assessment

Sub-Papers Description	Aspect	No. of Items
3ERW1	Reading	25
	Writing	1
3ERW2	Reading	25
	Writing	1
3ERW3	Reading	25
	Writing	1

Listening Assessment

Sub-Papers Description	No. of Items	Question Type
3EL1	20	Multiple choice
3EL2	19	Multiple choice
3EL3	19	Multiple choice

Speaking Assessment

Task Description	No. of Items	Way of Assessment
3ES01 、3ES03 、3ES05 、 3ES07 、3ES09 、3ES011	2	Read Aloud
3ES01-3ES012	4	Short answers
3ES02 、3ES04 、3ES06 、 3ES08 、3ES10 、3ES012	2	Picture Description

Mathematics

Category	No. of Items				
	Paper 1	Paper 2	Paper 3	Paper 4	Total
Number	19	19	20	19	57
Measures	10	10	8	9	30
Shape and Space	8	8	7	7	26
Data Handling	2	2	2	2	6
Total	39	39	37	37	119

Allocation of Sub-Papers to Primary 3 Students

	Time for Assessment	
Chinese Language		
Reading	25 minutes	Students randomly allocated one of the three sub-papers
Writing	40 minutes	Students randomly allocated one of two sub-papers
Listening	Around 20 minutes	Each class was randomly allocated one of two sub-papers
Speaking	4 minutes	Randomly selected students allocated one of 12 sub-papers
Chinese Audio-visual	Around 20 minutes	Randomly selected students allocated one of two sub-papers
English Language		
Reading and writing	30 minutes	Students randomly allocated one of the three sub-papers
Listening	Around 20 minutes	Each class was randomly allocated one of three sub-papers
Speaking	5 minutes	Randomly selected students allocated one of 12 sub-papers
Mathematics	40 minutes	Students randomly allocated one of four sub-papers

	Term	Definition
1.	Assessment	Assessment refers to actions undertaken to obtain information about student learning or performance in other domains such as affective and social. It is closely interconnected with curriculum and learning and teaching. Assessment activities should be planned and designed flexibly to suit various assessment purposes and students' needs.
2.	Assessment as learning	In assessment as learning, students actively develop understanding of their learning, critically assess the learning effectiveness, adjust learning strategies, plan for follow-up actions, and set future learning goals.
3.	Assessment for learning	Assessment for learning occurs in the learning and teaching process where teachers collect ongoing information about student learning, diagnose difficulties and provide timely and quality feedback for students to improve learning. The information collected also helps teachers improve learning and teaching and plan for follow-up actions.
4.	Assessment of learning	Assessment of learning refers to the activity which aims to make judgements on student achievement against learning targets, objectives or standards at a certain point of time.
5.	Assessment Literacy	It refers to the knowledge and skills (including understanding of a variety of assessment tools) that teachers possess to design or select appropriate assessment tasks to achieve assessment purposes, and to make an optimal use of assessment data and information to adjust teaching strategies for improving student learning.
6.	Basic Competencies	Basic Competencies are the essential knowledge and skills acquired by students in relation to the learning targets and objectives set out in the curriculum for each key stage, in order to learn effectively at next stage. The Basic Competencies represent just part of the curriculum requirement.
7.	Central Curriculum	The central curriculum recommended by the Curriculum Development Council for schools includes the overall aims of the school curriculum and the seven learning goals, five essential learning experiences, the curriculum frameworks of eight Key Learning Areas, Liberal Studies (S4-6) and Applied Learning. Other components include lesson time allocated to each Key Learning Area and Other Learning Experiences and specific requirements of individual Key Learning Areas.
8.	Curriculum Framework	The major components of a curriculum framework are knowledge and concepts, generic skills, values and attitudes relevant to each Key Learning Area. The framework sets out what students should learn and develop in terms of knowledge, skills, and values and attitudes in various key stages.