

Reference principles on supporting students’ home learning with e-learning modes during class suspension

To address certain misunderstandings of the education sector and general public about the way home learning should be supported with e-learning modes during class suspension, some principles and examples are provided herein to serve as illustration and reference for **local public sector primary and secondary schools** and to facilitate their proper planning.

Myth		Principles/Examples
1.	e-Learning is the only way of home learning during class suspension.	<p>Learning modes are diversified. Both online and offline learning should focus on encouraging students’ self-directed learning at home and cater for students’ needs and the school context.</p> <p><u>Examples of home learning modes:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ Schools may have assignments and other learning materials printed out for mail delivery to individual students or parents’ collection from the school on a need basis. This can be complemented by helpline service or communication with parents and students via mobile applications. ✧ Schools may organise online “parents’ day” to find out more about the learning and emotional needs of students at different levels by having different sessions of teacher-parent meetings.
2.	Real-time online teaching is the best way of e-learning.	<p>Real-time online teaching is merely one of the e-learning strategies.</p> <p><u>Other ways of e-learning:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ Teachers may provide students with learning materials, exercises and texts for extracurricular reading, collect assignments and offer feedback by using the learning management systems that they are familiar with, as well as emails and the school website. Planning should be the most crucial.
3.	Real-time online teaching should be arranged according to the usual timetable in	<p>It is not advisable to make it a rule for all subjects that real-time online teaching should be conducted according to the usual timetable. Schools should carefully consider how many real-time online teaching sessions be arranged each day, which are</p>

	Myth	Principles/Examples
	order to keep up with the teaching schedule.	<p>the suitable subjects/themes for real-time online teaching, and how much time students should be left with for self-learning, reading and individualised support/feedback.</p> <p><u>Principles for real-time online teaching:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ It is hard to say which are the suitable subjects or themes, as suitability depends on the specific features of each subject/theme, as well as teachers’ grasp of e-learning strategies. In general, real-time online teaching should be practised for more ready subject panels and by better-prepared teachers first. ✧ Total online lesson time should not be overly long. Each session of real-time online learning should be shorter than usual lessons in school and be reduced for lower grade students. There should be breaks between two sessions. The school should maintain close communication with parents, review implementation constantly and make necessary adjustments. <p><u>Learning progress:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ While the importance of learning progress cannot be overemphasised, there is no need for learning to strictly stick to the schedule of progress that the school has drawn up for the curriculum. The school may encourage students to read widely, carry out thematic explorations, etc. so as to enhance their ability to engage in self-directed learning and hence achieve the goal of home learning.
4.	e-Learning, including real-time online teaching, is suitable for students of all levels.	<p>Whether it is real-time online teaching or other e-learning modes, the actual implementation has to be well-planned, taking into account the learning needs of students at different ages and with special needs, students’ power of concentration, eye problems caused by prolonged use of electronic screen, etc.</p> <p><u>Recommendations:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ The advice of the Department of Health should be heeded and children aged between 2 and 6 should be discouraged from using devices with an

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		<p>electronic screen for long durations and be reminded to take breaks for relief of eye strain. In principle, real-time online teaching is not recommended for e-learning at kindergarten level.</p> <p>✧ Unless for brief communication with the school on their learning and emotional needs, young primary students and students with attention deficit are not supposed to go online for real-time learning.</p>
5.	<p>Schools should adopt standardised computer devices, e-learning platforms and practices for implementing e-learning.</p>	<p>Students’ needs vary with key stages and schools have different circumstances. It is thus not necessary for all schools to implement e-learning with a uniform approach (including the use of computer devices, e-learning platforms and practices).</p> <p><u>Principles:</u></p> <p>✧ Schools should adopt teaching strategies, learning and teaching resources, and learning activities appropriate to the needs of their students in order to cater for learner diversity.</p> <p>✧ Schools should be aware of any problems that students’ family might have in respect of hardware and Internet connection speed. There should be thorough consideration and coordination to ensure that students and parents have access to technical support and their enquiries are answered.</p> <p>✧ Schools should assess whether their school-based plan is being taken forward as expected and make necessary modification or adjustment to sustain students’ learning momentum.</p>
6.	<p>“One device Per Student” is the prerequisite for effective e-learning.</p>	<p>Equipping each student with a mobile computer device (“One Device Per Student”) does not mean effective implementation of e-learning. Yet since a lot of students need to use mobile computer devices for home learning during class suspension, schools could render assistance through deployment of various resources.</p> <p><u>Principles:</u></p> <p>✧ Schools should provide mobile computer devices</p>

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		<p>for students encountering difficulties on a loan basis and help them seek relevant financial assistance. Students and parents facing problems or difficulties should take their initiative to approach the school for appropriate support.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ The Education Bureau (EDB) has since the 2018/19 school year provided subsidy through the Community Care Fund for needy primary and secondary students studying in schools implementing the “Bring Your Own Device” policy to purchase their own mobile computer devices. All public sector primary and secondary schools implementing e-learning may apply to the Fund for financial assistance via the EDB on behalf of eligible students. While the application period for the current school year has already closed, the EDB will exercise flexibility in accepting further applications as many schools are trying out teaching practices on electronic platforms during class suspension. ✧ The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust has launched the Bandwidth Support for E-learning at Home Scheme to provide SIM cards for students of 1 000 primary and secondary schools. These new accounts enable students to enjoy free mobile data service up to four months.
7.	Teachers must have mastered advanced information technology before they could effectively promote e-learning.	<p>Advanced information technology is not a must for effective promotion of e-learning.</p> <p><u>Principle:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ Information technology should not be used merely for the sake of using technology. Coupled with flexible teaching strategies, many handy electronic tools can also effectively enhance students’ learning efficacy. Interactive e-learning can be achieved by simply using mobile computer devices (such as tablet and laptop computers), desktop computers or even smartphones. Teachers are expected to interact with students and help them develop the ability for self-directed learning.

	Myth	Principles/Examples
8.	Teachers lack support.	<p>On top of the routine professional development activities organised for schools and teachers, and the on-site supports rendered by IT in Education Centres of Excellence (CoEs), the EDB also provides schools/teachers with strengthened support in implementing e-learning during class suspension.</p> <p><u>Enhanced support:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ The EDB has newly created the dedicated webpage “Using e-learning platforms in combination with flipped classroom strategy to support student learning at home” (https://www.edb.gov.hk/ited/eh). Tens of video clips teaching skills in adopting e-learning platforms, flipped classroom strategy and real-time online teaching with a step-by-step approach have been uploaded for teachers’ reference. There is also a set of short self-study videos newly produced for teachers on the basics and practices about using e-teaching tools. ✧ The EDB provides support via hotlines (3698 3669 and 3698 3571), mobile applications, webinars and online self-study courses, dedicated webpages, etc. Since end-January this year, webinars on various topics are held every week to share teaching skills and planning strategies. Up to March, 20-odd sessions have been organised. ✧ The Hong Kong Education City has upgraded its network bandwidth and launched the dedicated webpage “Learn at Home with Diverse Online Resources” (https://www.hkedcity.net/home/zh-hant/learning), where e-learning resources, such as multimedia, reading and assessment materials, game-based learning platforms and educational television programmes for various subjects are made available under the categories of different key stages. ✧ The EDB One-stop Portal for Learning and Teaching Resources (https://www.hkedcity.net/edbosp) also provides resources on various Key Learning Areas. The EDB has recently produced a series of curriculum resources on COVID-19 to assist teachers in

Myth		Principles/Examples
		disseminating tips on epidemic prevention and relevant knowledge under different topics, and help students develop positive values (https://www.edb.gov.hk/tc/curriculum-development/resource-support/learning-teaching-resource-list/KLA-Resource-Lists/index.html).
9.	Cross-boundary students in the Mainland are unable to participate in online learning.	<p>To enable e-learning to cater for the needs of various students (including cross-boundary students), comprehensive planning and coordinated arrangements are necessary.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ The school may upload teaching videos and other learning materials for students by using e-learning platforms/systems that support cross-boundary connection. ✧ The school may deploy resources to provide support as appropriate if individual students encounter difficulties or have special needs. ✧ The EDB has actively negotiated with copyright owners to allow cross-boundary students in the Mainland to access resources, such as educational television programmes, through the Internet.

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