Introduction

Through participation in the Pilot Project on Strengthening Schools’ Administration Management (Pilot Project), school sponsoring bodies (SSBs) and schools have had professional interaction and collaboration at the administrative management level. Quite a number of schools have kicked off collaborative projects to identify practices and strategies that strengthen administrative management in various aspects. To further explore such synergy, Phases III and IV of the Pilot Project have been rolled out through an SSB-based approach. Under the leadership and facilitation of SSBs, sponsored schools have close collaboration and exchanges on issues of mutual concern and common development needs, seeking possible ways to enhance the effectiveness of overall administrative management and hence the effectiveness of individual schools.

Leverage Effect and Synergy

Facilitating communication and collaboration among schools is one of the key factors in achieving excellence in school administration. Through the Pilot Project, SSBs get a whole picture of the common needs of their sponsored schools and co-ordinate the formulation of generally applicable policy blueprints, such as guidelines on prevention of sexual harassment in schools, guidelines on prevention of corruption in schools and guidelines on financial management, to minimise duplication of administrative work among schools. On a trial basis, SSBs have also established platforms and mechanisms for participating schools to strengthen administration and, in the long term, enhance the overall administrative effectiveness of all sponsored schools. Examples include staff appraisal and professional development platform, and e-finance and procurement management platform.

To further examine how school administration as a whole can be enhanced through collaboration and exchanges, we have interviewed the sponsored schools of two of the SSBs participating in Phases I and III of the Pilot Project to study their modes of collaboration. The experience they have accumulated during the collaboration process is then consolidated in this issue for the reference of other schools.
Background: Yuen Long Public Middle School Alumni Association

There are three sponsored schools under the Yuen Long Public Middle School Alumni Association (YLPMSAA), namely, **YLPMSAA Tang Siu Tong Secondary School** (Tang Siu Tong Secondary School), **YLPMSAA Primary School** and **YLPMSAA Ying Yip Primary School** (Ying Yip Primary School). Under the leadership of the SSB, the three sponsored schools have participated in Phase III of the Pilot Project together.

Seamless Transition and Holistic Care

YLPMSAA Primary School and Ying Yip Primary School are the nominated schools of Tang Siu Tong Secondary School. At the central allocation stage each year, Tang Siu Tong Secondary School has to, upon deduction of repeater and discretionary places, reserve 25% of the remaining Secondary One places for its nominated primary schools. At present, over 40% of the students in Tang Siu Tong Secondary School are graduates of its two nominated primary schools. The ratio has been on an upward trend in recent years, showing parents’ trust and support for the mission and vision of the SSB and the school. The SSB and the three schools wish to establish a student portfolio e-platform to further strengthen support and care for students, and to facilitate collaboration among the three schools in keeping track of students’ learning progress and their development needs. With parents’ consent, Tang Siu Tong Secondary School may, using the e-platform, retrieve data and records of new entrants coming from its nominated primary schools to know better these students’ strengths, weaknesses and aptitudes in learning. This will help schools make appropriate and timely arrangements for curriculum interface and remedial support; identify and develop students’ talents, interests and characteristics; arrange suitable extra-curricular activities; and provide more comprehensive support. In short, the three schools hope that the e-platform is able to capture all the information about students’ development and growth so as to ensure seamless transition during their 12-year study and to provide support for their development in a more timely, comprehensive and effective manner.

The SSB has not only arranged for the three schools to jointly procure the e-platform, but also minimised the administrative work they would need to undertake by liaising with the service provider and following up on system set-up on their behalf. With the introduction of this e-platform, the three schools also took the opportunity to review the school-based workflow and procedures in collecting and processing student data.
Common Practices and Individual Needs

The three schools are geographically close to each other. Interconnected, they serve students and parents from the same district. They also share common goals on various development issues and have a close working relationship. For example, conscious of the importance to help students develop a reading habit and an interest in reading, the three schools have all launched a variety of reading award schemes to encourage extensive reading. In implementing subject-based and integrated reading schemes, teachers have to process a large quantity of information and data and the work involved is laborious. The library management systems currently in use are only capable of performing basic functions in relation to circulation and stock-taking of library items, but unable to generate any reading record by student/class/subject. To address this, an administrative management system has been introduced by the three schools under the Pilot Project to process circulation of library items, and to generate for students a 12-year reading record using the common student portfolio e-platform to facilitate the planning of different reading strategies and schemes. The system also has the function of streamlining such routine administrative work as payment, attendance-taking and home-school correspondence.

Yet, on common administrative issues, the three schools have remained cautious not to standardise their practices rashly. They commission different service providers and adopt different approaches having regard to their respective needs and circumstances. In this way, they may draw reference and experience from the practices of each other. Take the use of smart card for attendance-taking and payment as an example. Given the greater self-care abilities of secondary school students, an integrated smart card with monetary value is used by Tang Siu Tong Secondary School to save costs and the need to issue other smart cards. Instead of using a smart card to take attendance, Ying Yip Primary School chooses to set up a platform for teachers to input students’ attendance records in classroom, so that the general office may follow up and parents may check their children’s attendance through the platform in a timely manner. As for YLPMSAA Primary School, a smart card without monetary value is used. It combines the existing student card, library card and payment card into one to facilitate management. The use of this smart card is limited to school administrative matters only, thus no financial loss will be incurred by a primary school student in case of improper use or loss of the card. Details are set out in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Attendance-taking and Payment</th>
<th>Considerations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tang Siu Tong Secondary School</td>
<td>Service Provider A</td>
<td>♦ A smart card is used to make payment and take attendance, and its system should be compatible with the one widely used by students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ying Yip Primary School</td>
<td>Service Providers A and B</td>
<td>♦ A smart card is used to make payment, and its system should be compatible with the one widely used by students.  ♦ Teachers take attendance in classroom and then input information to the platform.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YLPMSAA Primary School</td>
<td>Service Provider B</td>
<td>♦ A multi-purpose smart card without monetary value is used to take attendance. ♦ A smart card account should be linked up to the integrated administrative and home-school communication platform for parents to check their children’s attendance and payment records.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
During the period covered by the project, a school premises manager was recruited by the three schools with pooled funding. On a rotation basis, the premises manager is attached to each school to assist the senior teachers of general affairs in the management and maintenance of the school premises. This includes reviewing, consolidating and revising work procedures for school premises management and maintenance, setting out the details and points to note for such work (e.g. essential steps for works inspection and acceptance, and effective ways for thorough cleaning of the school premises), and establishing procedures and databases. In addition, training is arranged for school staff to enhance their expertise so that the relevant work can be handed over to the general office and minor staff in future.

Background: Anglican (Hong Kong) Primary School Council Ltd.

There are 46 public sector primary schools under the Anglican (Hong Kong) Primary School Council Ltd. Three of them, namely, S.K.H. Tin Shui Wai Ling Oi Primary School, S.K.H. St. Joseph’s Primary School and S.K.H. Yuen Chen Maun Chen Jubilee Primary School, have participated in Phase I of the Pilot Project. Under the leadership and facilitation of the SSB, the three schools have examined administrative work areas of common concern and decided to try soliciting professional support for school premises management.

Consolidating Resources and Sharing Expertise
Collaborating Closely with Trust and Open-mindedness

As the project co-ordinator, S.K.H. Tin Shui Wai Ling Oi Primary School undertakes administrative work such as recruitment, stipulating service conditions, signing contract with the premises manager, and payment of salaries. Remuneration for the premises manager is equally shared among the three schools and the duty schedule is drawn up through consultation. Each school may assign different kinds of work to the premises manager in the light of its own needs. Under exceptional circumstances, such as relocation of premises, as well as alteration and urgent repair works, the three schools may discuss how to flexibly adjust the duty schedule to address each other’s needs. As stated by Principal Hung of the co-ordinating school, the collaborative project could not have been smoothly implemented without the trust built among the three schools and the open-mindedness they embraced in the course of communication.

Thorough Review for Succession and Development

The three schools remark that the project has enabled their staff to follow up on maintenance and repair work more efficiently and effectively. One of the schools has also taken the opportunity to review its overall arrangements and needs with regard to the discharge of administrative duties. As the premises manager is able to take up some administrative work of the general office, it becomes possible for the school to retain only one senior teacher of general affairs and redeploy the other to undertake tasks pertaining to subject-specific development and student support, such as information technology curriculum development and student discipline, thereby relieving the administrative workload of other teams.

The three schools also hope that the second-tier management personnel will be trained up by the premises manager, so that these staff members can prepare themselves for the succession and development of the school upon acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills. By jointly hiring the premises manager, the three schools have further enhanced their exchanges of experience in school administration. Besides, the school-based procedures and databases established with the assistance of the premises manager serve not only as a source of reference among themselves, but also as a means of support for other schools under the same SSB.
As the saying goes, “Two heads are better than one.” The interactive exchanges of ideas or resources among schools not only increase their bargaining power with service providers, but also reduce duplication in resources consumption and administrative procedures. More importantly, such exchanges contribute to collective wisdom, enabling the schools to make more comprehensive and in-depth assessment for their projects’ development and sustainability. Meanwhile, SSBs’ facilitation and support in the process have produced leverage effect and achieved among their sponsored schools the synergy that helps enhance the overall effectiveness of school administration.

Despite the fact that the two SSBs introduced in this issue vary greatly in scale of operation, the collaborative projects undertaken by their sponsored schools have benefited all collaborators and achieved a win-win outcome. Through these projects, the schools have identified areas and modes of co-operation. They have achieved the expected effectiveness and the desired goals while taking account of their respective needs and circumstances. As a result, the quality of their education services has been further enhanced. Shared visions and goals, mutual trust, as well as proactive and open communication are the foundations for collaboration, but none of these comes overnight. As seen from the above, participating schools have established a close rapport with each other through regular communication on routine matters. In addition, the experience in effective collaboration among schools may encourage co-operation in other areas and invite the participation of other schools, which is conducive to a better sharing and collaborating culture among schools.

For implementation and other details of the projects mentioned above, please directly approach the contact persons of the schools concerned. For other matters, please contact the School Administration and Management Section (Tel No: 2863 4606/2863 4624).

Contact Persons:

“Joint Development of the Student Portfolio E-Platform”:  
SO Ka-leung, Vice Principal of YLPMSAA Tang Siu Tong Secondary School

“Joint Hiring of the School Premises Manager”:  
HUNG Wai-shing, Principal of S.K.H. Tin Shui Wai Ling Oi Primary School

In addition to the collaborative projects introduced above, there are various collaborative projects and approaches developed by other SSBs and schools participating in the Pilot Project. Relevant details, together with this Bulletin, are available on EDB website:  

Acknowledgements:

- YLPMSAA Tang Siu Tong Secondary School:  
POON Wing-yi, Ruby (Principal)  
SO Ka-leung (Vice Principal)

- YLPMSAA Primary School:  
CHAN Chi-hung (Principal)  
WU Ka-hoi (Senior Teacher)

- YLPMSAA Ying Yip Primary School:  
MAN Chi-yam (Principal)  
LUK Ting-kai (Senior Teacher)  
LIU Shuk-ha (Teacher)

- S.K.H. Tin Shui Wai Ling Oi Primary School:  
HUNG Wai-shing (Principal)

- S.K.H. St. Joseph’s Primary School:  
LO Mei-yan (Principal)  
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