



本局檔號 Our Ref.:  
來函檔號 Your Ref.:

電子郵件 E-mail: embinfo@emb.gcn.gov.hk  
電話 Telephone: 2810 2018  
傳真 Faxline: 2530 3780

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Dear Principal,

### **Promotion of a Reading Culture in School**

I am pleased to welcome you, teachers and students and your school community, including your sponsoring body, school management committee, staff and parents, back for the start of a productive and exciting school year.

I want to take this opportunity to thank you in advance for all the hard work your school community will do this year on behalf of the young people of Hong Kong. I know that you will have already undertaken detailed planning to continuously improve the quality of learning experiences for the students in your school.

The Curriculum Development Council has finalized its *Basic Education Curriculum Guide – Building on Strengths 2002 (BECG) and Curriculum Guides* for the Key Learning Areas to provide guidance on how to realize both the aims of education (EC, 2000) and the recommendations made in the report on Learning to Learn – The Way Forward in Curriculum Development (CDC, 2001). The BECG sets out Four Key Tasks for all of us to focus on in the curriculum reform: moral and civic education, reading to learn, project learning and information technology for interactive learning.

I am writing to you to outline our effort to further support you in one of those Four Key Tasks – ‘learning to read, reading to learn’. This is because I believe that the promotion of a reading culture in school can leverage two important outcomes in our students’ learning, and address two of our major concerns in education – language proficiency and learning capacity. All schools will receive some form of support, the level and depth depending on their stage of development and readiness.

In a knowledge-based society, students in Hong Kong need to engage in life-long learning in order to better prepare themselves for the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Schools play an essential role in equipping students with the skills of learning to read and reading to learn to enhance their overall capacity for life-long learning and whole-person development.

Research studies have shown that development of students' reading skills should start as early as possible. Particular attention should be paid to the early primary years when students should be helped to learn to read and read to learn at the same time. Local Hong Kong research indicates that while there are many successful approaches in schools to support a reading culture, much still needs to be done if our objective of higher learning standards for all students is to be achieved.

Schools will have already incorporated school-based reading-related strategies into their overall school plan supporting the 'learning to read, reading to learn' task, including:

1. Incorporating reading as a key task in the school development programme
2. Adopting a whole-school approach and creating facilitating conditions
3. Allocating time for reading both inside and outside the KLA framework
4. Teaching essential reading skills
5. Developing and sustaining motivation and interest
6. Acquisition of diverse and appropriate reading materials
7. Recognizing the new role and effective deployment of teacher-librarians
8. Deployment of NETs to help promote an enhanced reading culture
9. Harnessing the support of parents

The appendix sets out these strategies in greater detail.

The Education Department (ED) will provide additional and more effective support for these strategies throughout the next two years.

For the 2002/03 school year, ED is refocusing its effort to prioritize support in the following ways:

1. Delivery of a professional development programme on the reading key task including the teaching of essential reading skills (five by three-hour modules) targeted for primary Chinese and English language teachers.
2. Development and professional support for school-based delivery of a programme to assist parents of P1 and P2 students to help their children learn to read and read to learn.
3. Focused school-based development support to evaluate 'learning to read, reading to learn' strategies and help set targets for improvement. This support will be direct for some schools. The evaluative instruments and most promising strategies developed in collaboration with schools will be disseminated and professionally supported in all schools over the next two years.
4. Building district-based networks of key professional staff, including the new PSM(CD), language panel heads and teachers including NETs.

These support measures will commence from October / November 2002. The professional development programmes will be announced through the ED's Training Calendar. Details of other support measures will be available through School Development Officers.

The success in promoting a reading culture both inside and outside school hinges on the leadership of school heads and collaboration among key professional staff, including curriculum leaders, panel heads, teacher-librarians, teachers and parents.



I would like to take this opportunity to appeal to you again for your concerted and continuous effort in promoting a reading culture in school for the benefit of young people in Hong Kong.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Fanny Law', written in dark ink.

(Mrs Fanny Law)

Permanent Secretary for Education and Manpower

### Strategies for Promotion of a Reading Culture in School

#### 1. Incorporating reading as a key task in school development programme

The school head can give priority to reading as a whole-school responsibility and incorporate reading as a key task in the school development programme. It is also recommended that the school's efforts in this area be reflected in the School Profile to enhance parents' understanding of the work of the school on Reading to Learn.

#### 2. Adopting a whole-school approach and creating facilitating conditions

There is evidence that a whole school approach to promoting reading facilitates the development of students' reading skills and habits. The *Basic Education Curriculum Guide, Booklet 3B Reading to Learn* contains recommendations and guidance on whole school actions and facilitating measures.

#### 3. Allocating time for reading both inside and outside the KLA framework

To help students develop individual reading interest and a regular reading habit, schools will include reading in the lessons of Chinese and English language. Subject teachers in all Key Learning Areas should be encouraged to adopt reading to learn as one of the prime learning strategies for better understanding by students. In addition, flexible and structured time-slots to encourage and promote reading can be designated in the school timetable and flexible reading time can be arranged using non timetabled opportunities including lunch, after school and after examinations.

#### 4. Teaching essential reading skills

Students need essential reading skills and strategies in order to read effectively. Language teachers will play a crucial role in the teaching and development of students' reading skills and strategies in the lessons of Chinese and English languages, while other teachers encourage students to broaden their knowledge and exposure through reading materials linked to their specific learning area.

The Chinese Language Education and English Language Education Key Learning Area Curriculum Guides will be central to the language education programmes in all schools. The Curriculum Guides can be complemented by reading the key references marked with asterisks on the Chinese Language and English Language KLA web pages at <http://cd.ed.gov.hk>. These references enhance our understanding of how to assist in helping students develop essential reading skills and strategies.

5. Developing and sustaining motivation and interest

Intrinsic as well as extrinsic motivation is important for developing and sustaining students' interest in reading. Schools can begin with prizes and encouragement. It is preferable to use book coupons as prizes to encourage reading. Positive and constructive feedback from teachers, peers, and parents is also essential for developing and sustaining students' interest. The school head should note that overuse of book reports can dampen students' interest. Role modeling, opportunities to share reading experiences among teachers and students, student interaction generated from reading and provision of diverse quality reading materials can enhance enjoyment in reading and motivate students to read.

6. Acquisition of diverse and appropriate reading materials

It is essential to expose students to a text-rich environment with ample quality reading materials that are appropriate to their cognitive levels, linguistic competence and interests. Schools should make effective use of reading grants for the acquisition of these materials. To facilitate schools to select quality materials, the Education Department (ED) will continue to collect and collate reading lists for school's reference. Clear criteria on quality reading materials will be set to strengthen support in this area.

7. Recognizing the new role and effective deployment of teacher-librarians

School heads who have recognized the new role of teacher-librarians and deployed them full time to perform their professional functions have achieved outstanding results.



Through purposeful provision of a diverse reading and learning resource collection, the school library provides opportunities for students to get pleasure and meaning through reading, and enables students to learn how to deal confidently and competently with the plethora of information available. The role of the teacher-librarian has evolved from that of 'keeper of books' to that of 'information specialist'. School heads will recognize the new role of teacher-librarians in supporting curriculum reform, in particular sourcing quality reading and learning resources and equipping students with the information skills, in collaboration with other teachers of different Key Learning Areas and subjects.

The teacher-librarian post is a regular post **in addition to** the normal teaching establishment of a school. It is important for the school head to deploy the teacher-librarian **full time** so that he / she can carry out his / her duties effectively. Even for schools without a central library, the teacher-librarian can be deployed to coordinate meaningful activities to promote reading and develop students' information skills. It is essential for the school head to support the teacher-librarian by communicating clearly with all teachers the need to make effective use of library services delivered by the teacher-librarian. It should be noted that School Management Committees, upon the provision of the CM teacher-librarian post, may deploy a teacher at senior rank such as AM / PSM / GM / SGM to perform the duties of the teacher-librarian, and the service of a teacher-librarian is regarded as teaching experience towards promotion.

8. Deployment of Native-speaking English Teachers (NETs) to help promote an enhanced reading culture

The Primary NET Scheme is being implemented over the next two school years. By 2003/04 each primary school will share a NET in partnership with another school. The Primary NET Scheme complements the established Secondary NET Scheme. School heads are encouraged to effectively deploy NETs in teaching English reading skills and in designing and conducting school-based English reading programmes and contributing with the English and Chinese Panels to a conducive language environment in every school.

9. Harnessing the support of parents

There is substantial research which indicates the important role parents can play in the learning to read, reading to learn task. Parents play an essential role in developing their children's reading habits and skills. In this connection, a school-based parent education workshop package is being developed for use by Student Guidance Officers/Student Guidance Teachers and teachers. The objective is to harness the support of parents and provide them with practical suggestions and skills in helping their children develop good reading habits and skills.

Each of the strategies outlined above will be part of a school's sustained effort in promoting the 'learning to read, reading to learn' task. It is the role of ED to support schools in each of these strategies.