

**The Second Meeting of the Education Sub-committee on
the Community Care Fund
2 March 2011**

Summary of Discussion

The Education Sub-committee on the Community Care Fund (CCF) held its second meeting on 2 March 2011. A summary of the discussion is as follows:

1. Members agreed to adopt the strategy of “dealing with the simple issues before tackling the difficult ones”, and proposed to set up a new school-based fund as soon as possible to provide assistance in a flexible way to needy primary and secondary students to participate in cross-boundary learning activities outside Hong Kong which were organised or recognised by their schools. This would be a three-year programme and the target beneficiaries were students receiving Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) and full or half grant from the assistance schemes under the Student Financial Assistance Agency (SFAA), as well as other students meeting the means-test criteria set by schools. The Education Bureau would set a funding allocation ceiling for each participating school based on the number of students receiving CSSA/full or half grant from the assistance schemes under SFAA. Schools should use the fund flexibly having regard to the needs of individual students instead of making equal funding allocation to all eligible students.
2. Members noted the many views from various sectors of the community suggested that CCF should consider providing financial assistance to students from low-income families so that they had the same opportunities as other students to participate in school activities (such as cross-boundary learning activities). Members agreed that cross-boundary learning activities became increasingly popular. Such activities would not only help in opening up students’ mind and broadening their horizon, but also enable them to learn to get along with and caring for others etc. which were beyond classroom teaching. The cost of cross-boundary learning activities was generally high. Students from low-income families often had less opportunity to attend these

activities comparing with other students, as their families could not afford the expenses or the assistance was inadequate. Therefore, assistance provided by CCF could improve the situation.

3. Members noted that the administrative simplicity of the programme provided school principals with considerable flexibility in resource allocation. They might determine the use of the subsidy according to the funding allocation ceiling and the needs of individual students, to provide assistance to most needy students directly, and also to cater for students from families with unexpected financial difficulties according to their specific circumstances and needs.
4. Members proposed that consideration be given to:
 - (1) the sustainability of the programme and incorporating the programme into regular government services when appropriate so that funds from CCF could be reserved for implementing other proposed programmes; and
 - (2) the need to set a ceiling on the level of subsidy or expenses for each student.
5. Regarding the proposal to assist students from low-income families with exemplary performance in sports or art to participate in extra-school professional competitions, Members considered that the number of beneficiaries would be limited and there were sufficient existing means to assist students in participating in such activities. Therefore, the limited resources available could be reserved for other purposes.
6. Some Members suggested that assistance should be provided to students from low-income families with potentials in art and sports to receive training or purchase apparatus such as musical instruments. Members noted that there might be great demand and suggested that more detailed consideration should be given before formulating feasible and concrete proposals.
7. Members noted that there was keen demand for more after-school care services from the community, particularly from low-income families, and

therefore suggested that a detailed study to be conducted on how to strengthen the services with a view to formulating concrete proposals. Members noted that there were various existing regular means to provide after-school care services/tutorial services for needy students and the three-year pilot scheme to be launched which would encourage and arrange for university students to provide after-school homework guidance to primary students from low-income families. Consideration should be given to enhancing collaboration between schools and non-governmental organisations, as well as to studying the nature and target beneficiaries etc. of the existing services which required enhancement prior to further deliberation on the corresponding assistance programme.

8. Members noted the timetable of the CCF in the coming months, i.e. the second meetings of the Executive Committee and the Steering Committee would be held in end-March and mid-April respectively, and the funding submission to the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council for an injection of \$5 billion into the CCF was planned for early May.