

10 July 2015

Education Bureau Circular No. 12/2015

**Teacher Professional Development
on Catering for Students with Special Educational Needs**

【Note: This circular should be read by

- (a) Supervisors and heads of all primary schools, secondary schools and special schools - for necessary action; and
- (b) Heads of sections - for information】

Summary

This circular informs schools of the arrangements for teacher professional development on catering for students with special educational needs (SEN). Schools should formulate their school-based teacher training plans having regard to the training targets set out below with a view to enhancing the capacity of their teachers in catering for students with SEN. This circular supersedes Education Bureau Circular No. 8/2012 dated 12 June 2012.

Background

2. To tie in with the 3-tier intervention model for helping students with SEN advocated by the Education Bureau (EDB) and to enhance the professional capacity of teachers in catering for students with SEN, EDB launched a teacher professional development framework on integrated education (the Framework) in the 2007/08 school year. Under the Framework, structured training courses pitched at three levels, i.e. Basic, Advanced and Thematic (BAT Courses), are conducted for serving teachers and training targets are set. We hope that each school would aggregate a critical mass of teachers with relevant training to guide their counterparts in school to implement integrated education (IE) through the Whole School Approach (WSA) so as to provide appropriate support for students with SEN. We have conducted a review of the effectiveness of the Framework in 2012, feedback from schools and other stakeholders was positive. Having considered the views of various stakeholders, we launched a new round of BAT Courses with adjusted training contents and targets in the 2012/13 school year.

3. We have been regularly monitoring the progress of teacher training in catering for students with SEN. Since the 2009/10 school year, we have annually provided each of the public sector ordinary schools with a written update on their teacher training position to facilitate their planning for teacher professional development. As at February 2015, more than 30% of the public sector ordinary school teachers have received 30 hours or more structured training in special education.

4. Owing to the increased awareness among teachers and parents as well as improvement in assessment tools and identification procedures, the number of students with SEN identified in ordinary schools has increased. Stakeholders share the view that teacher training is a key factor contributing to effective support for students with SEN. To sustain teachers' professional capacity in catering for students with SEN, we will continue to provide the BAT Courses as in-service training for teachers and strengthen the practical elements of the courses to give teachers more opportunities to apply the knowledge they acquired.

Details

Basic, Advanced and Thematic (BAT) Courses

5. Contents of the BAT Courses are as follows:

(i) Basic Course on Catering for Diverse Learning Needs

This is a 30-hour course consisting of principles, theories and practices of teaching strategies, curriculum and assessment accommodations to cater for diverse learning needs. It aims at helping teachers better grasp the appropriate strategies and skills to provide tier-1 and to some extent, tier-2 support of the 3-tier intervention model for students with SEN.

(ii) Advanced Course on Catering for Diverse Learning Needs

This is a 102-hour course consisting of core module (including an attachment programme), elective modules and a school-based project for teachers to put the support strategies into practice. The Course aims at further strengthening teachers' professional capacity in providing tier-2 support for students with SEN.

(iii) Thematic Courses on Supporting Students with SEN

The Thematic Courses aim at providing in-depth training for teachers to help them acquire the knowledge and skills in catering for students with SEN who require tier-3 support. The Courses will be grouped according to the educational needs of students under three categories. One or more Thematic Course(s) with a duration ranging from 90 to 120 hours will be offered under each category. The three categories are:

(a) Cognition and Learning Needs

focusing on the needs of students with Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) or Intellectual Disability (ID);

(b) Behavioural, Emotional and Social Development Needs

focusing on the needs of students with Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD) or Attention Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD);

(c) Sensory, Communication and Physical Needs

focusing on the needs of students with Physical Disability (PD), Visual Impairment (VI), Hearing Impairment (HI) or Speech and Language Impairment (SLI).

Training Course for Special School Teachers (TCSST)

6. In view of different educational needs of students enrolled in special schools, a 240-hour training course specifically offered to special school teachers has been launched since the 2012/13 school year. Based on good and positive feedback from the sector, we will continue the provision of TCSST. TCSST comprises four modules: (i) theories, principles and practices in special education; (ii) academic and learning support; (iii) behavioural, emotional, and social development support; and (iv) sensory, communication and physical support. Practicum will also be arranged, during which the course tutors would organize lesson observations cum discussions, project work and experience sharing sessions for the participants to help them transfer the knowledge acquired into practical skills in the real classroom.

Training for Principals and Teaching Assistants

7. For successful implementation of IE, schools are required to establish corresponding school policies, culture and practices. As the school leader, principals have a genuine need to keep abreast of the latest IE policy and practices and to understand the most recent development of IE worldwide. Moreover, as it is a common practice for

schools to deploy funding flexibly to employ teaching assistants (TAs) to assist teachers in catering for students with SEN, the TAs also need to be trained to acquire the relevant knowledge and skills. We will therefore continue to provide in-service training for serving principals and TAs.

Other Training Programmes on SEN

8. Apart from the above, we will continue to organize seminars, workshops and experience-sharing sessions on topics related to SEN for teachers and other school personnel on a need basis.

9. For quality assurance and cost-effectiveness, the content and mode of operation of the BAT Courses, TCSST and the other training courses mentioned above will be reviewed and adjusted as and when necessary, taking into consideration the feedback from participants and the latest development of catering for students with SEN.

10. For details of the training courses and application, please refer to the Training Calendar [<http://tcs.edb.gov.hk/>].

Training Targets

11. Taking into account the position of teachers trained in public sector ordinary schools and the types and numbers of students with SEN enrolled in ordinary schools, we have set the training targets for each of the public sector ordinary schools to be achieved by the end of the 2019/20 school year as follows:

- (i) at least 15% to 25% of teachers will have completed the Basic Course;
- (ii) at least six to nine teachers will have completed the Advanced Course; and
- (iii) at least six to nine teachers will have completed the Thematic Courses (with at least one teacher completing the course(s) under each category as far as possible).

12. With the growing public awareness of equal opportunity, stakeholders have high expectation of schools in providing quality education for students with SEN and attach great importance to enhancing teachers' professional capacity to better cater for these students. Teachers in general have also indicated the need for continuous teacher training in this respect. Hence, all schools must draw up a school-based teacher professional development plan on catering for students with SEN and make strategic arrangements for their teachers to receive training, and strive to achieve the above training

targets by the end of the 2019/20 school year with a view to enhancing the effectiveness of schools in catering for the students' diverse learning needs through WSA. Schools with a relatively larger number of students with SEN can arrange more teachers to receive the related training according to their own circumstances.

13. As for special schools, they should nominate their teachers to attend TCSST and/or BAT Courses as appropriate, with the ultimate target of equipping each and every teacher of the schools with the necessary knowledge and skills to handle students with severe or multiple disabilities.

14. Schools should include the teacher professional development plan on catering for students with SEN as one of the items in their regular school self-evaluation. We will continue to inform public sector ordinary schools of their teacher training situation on an annual basis to facilitate their school-based planning and review. We will monitor the progress in target attainment of the schools. When necessary, we will render appropriate support and intervention measures, including scrutinizing the school-based teacher professional development plan with schools. The training targets will be reviewed having regard to the training position of schools in due course.

Provision of Supply Teachers

15. The BAT Courses and TCSST will be conducted in a full-time block-release mode. Regular teachers of government and aided primary, secondary and special schools will be granted paid study leave for attending these courses¹ and supply teachers will be provided for the schools accordingly. Government schools and aided schools without an incorporated management committee (IMC) will be provided with the supply teacher grant according to the established procedure. For aided schools with an IMC, they can apply for reimbursement of the salaries of the supply teachers by completing the related claim form that can be downloaded from the following website:

www.edb.gov.hk > Education System and Policy > Special Education > Teacher Training

16. Teachers of Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) schools are also required to attend the BAT Courses. The training targets set out in paragraph 11 above also apply to DSS schools. The expenditure on supply teachers has been subsumed into the unit subsidy of the DSS schools and therefore they do not need to apply separately.

¹ The paid study leave will not include the practicum activities of TCSST since such activities will take place in the participants' own schools and other participants' schools at irregular intervals.

Recognition for Promotion Purpose

17. Public sector school teachers who have completed any combination of the BAT Courses amounting to a total of 90 contact hours or more can be recognized as having completed the acceptable refresher training courses for promotion purpose.

18. As for aided special school teachers, successful completion of TCSST or a combination of the BAT Courses on different topics with an aggregated 240 contact hours, or equivalent, will be recognized as having obtained special education qualification for promotion purpose starting from the 2012/13 school year. Teachers who have already completed the training courses under the Framework and have been recognized as having the special education qualification for promotion will not be affected.

Enquiries

19. For enquiries, please contact the Special Education Support 2 Section on 3698 3729.

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for Secretary for Education