

12 June 2012

**Education Bureau Circular No. 8/2012**

**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 are required to formulate their school-based teacher training plan 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 the Education Bureau Circular No. 13/2007 dated 24 October 2007.

**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, the EDB launched a five-year 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. We hoped that within the five years from the 2007/08 school year, in each ordinary school, (i) at least 10% of teachers will complete the Basic Course; (ii) at least three teachers will complete the Advanced Course; (iii) at least one Chinese language teacher and one English language teacher will complete the Thematic Course on Specific Learning Difficulties; and (iv) for the other types of students with SEN that individual schools have to cater for, at least one teacher will complete the related Thematic Course.

3. Schools were encouraged to arrange teachers to attend the BAT Courses in a systematic manner with reference to the above training targets. It was expected that a critical mass of teachers having received training in catering for students with SEN would be formed in each of the ordinary schools and those teachers would guide their counterparts to implement integrated education (IE) through the Whole School Approach (WSA) and to provide appropriate support for students with SEN.

4. We have been monitoring regularly the progress of teacher training in catering for students with SEN. In mid 2010 and 2011, we 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. By the end of the 2011/12 school year, more than 25% of the public sector ordinary school teachers will have received 30 hours or more structured training in catering for students with SEN.

5. 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 one of the key factors contributing to effective support for students with SEN. The findings of the review on the Framework conducted by EDB also revealed that schools and other stakeholders had positive views on the BAT Courses. In view of the above, we consider it necessary to continue the provision of the BAT Courses as in-service training for teachers.

## **Details**

### Basic, Advanced and Thematic (BAT) Courses

6. For the upcoming BAT Courses, the content of the Basic Course and the core module of the Advanced Course will basically remain unchanged. Having regard to the feedback from schools, we will suitably adjust the number of days of the optional attachment under the Advanced Course. Moreover, in consideration of the international trend of supporting students according to their needs, we will re-categorize the elective modules of the Advanced Course and the Thematic Courses according to the educational needs of students with SEN instead of the SEN types. The revised arrangements and 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 a module on principles, theories and practices of curriculum, teaching strategies 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 90-hour course consisting of core and elective modules and a school-based project for teachers to put the support strategies into practice. Participants may also opt for an attachment to a special school and/or an ordinary school. 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 who are with such special needs and 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 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 Autism 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

7. In view of the educational needs of students with severe or multiple disabilities

enrolled in special schools, a training course for special school teachers (TCSST) on “Education of Students with Severe or Multiple Disabilities” will be offered to meet the teachers’ specific training needs. The TCSST will be a 240-hour course comprising four modules: (i) theories, principles and practices in special education; (ii) academic and learning support; (iii) emotional, behavioural and social development support; and (iv) sensory, communication and physical support. Practicum will 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

8. For IE to be implemented successfully, 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 IE policy and practices and to understand the latest 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, schools have indicated to us the training needs of TAs. We will therefore continue to provide training for serving principals and TAs.

#### Other Training Programmes on SEN

9. 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.

10. For quality assurance and cost-effectiveness, the content and mode of operation of the BAT Courses, the 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.

11. Details of the training courses and application will be uploaded onto the Training Calendar [<http://tcs.edb.gov.hk>] when available.

#### **Training Targets**

12. Taking into account the position of teachers trained in public sector ordinary schools and the types and numbers of students with SEN enrolled in schools, we have set the training targets for each of the public sector ordinary schools to be achieved by the end

of the 2014/15 school year as follows:

- (i) at least 10% to 15% of teachers will complete the Basic Course;
- (ii) at least three to six teachers will complete the Advanced Course; and
- (iii) at least three to six teachers will complete the Thematic Courses (with at least one teacher completing the course(s) under each category as far as possible).

13. With the enhanced awareness of equal opportunity, the community and stakeholders have high expectation of schools in providing quality education for students with SEN and attach great importance to upgrading the 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 are strongly requested to draw up a school-based teacher professional development plan on catering for students with SEN and make appropriate arrangements for their teachers to receive training. In principle, all public sector ordinary schools should meet the above threshold of requirements in respect of each type of the BAT Courses. Schools with a relatively larger number of students with SEN should strive to meet the upper end of the above training targets. As for special schools, they should nominate their teachers to attend the 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 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. As mentioned in paragraph 3 above, we expect that all these schools will have a critical mass of teachers having received relevant training to guide their counterparts to implement IE and to provide quality support for students with SEN. We will keep in view the progress in target attainment of the schools and consider appropriate support and intervention measures as appropriate. 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 the 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 courses<sup>1</sup> 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 claim form that can be downloaded from the following website:

[http://www.edb.gov.hk/FileManager/TC/Content\\_7386/edb\\_form\\_123\\_c.pdf](http://www.edb.gov.hk/FileManager/TC/Content_7386/edb_form_123_c.pdf).

16. Teachers of Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) schools are also required to attend the BAT Courses. The training targets set out in paragraph 12 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.

### **Recognition for Promotion Purpose**

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

18. As for aided special school teachers, successful completion of the TCSST or a combination of the BAT Courses on different topics with an aggregated 240 contact hours, or equivalent, will be recognized as special education qualification for promotion purpose starting from the school year that the TCSST commences. 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 at 3698 3729.

Miss P L WU  
for Secretary for Education

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