

16 March 2020

**Education Bureau Circular No. 2/2020**

**Project on ‘Whole School Approach to Providing Tiered Support for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders’**

**[Note : This circular should be read by –**

- (a) Supervisors and heads of all Government, Aided, and Direct Subsidy Scheme primary and secondary schools – for necessary action; and**
- (b) Heads of special schools and sections – for information]**

**Summary**

This circular serves to elucidate the details of the Project on ‘Whole School Approach to Providing Tiered Support for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders’ (hereinafter referred to as the ASD Project) which will be implemented by the Education Bureau (EDB) in public sector ordinary primary and secondary schools in phases from the 2020/21 school year, and to invite ordinary primary and secondary schools to participate in the first part of the ASD Project – a 2-year ‘School-based Multi-Disciplinary Professional Support’, to enhance the support for students with autism spectrum disorders (ASD).

**Background**

2. Schools in general find teaching students with ASD very challenging. In the light of this, the EDB has been developing an evidence-based ‘Tiered Autism Intervention Model for Students with ASD<sup>1</sup>’ (AIM Model) (please refer to [Appendix 1](#) for details) since 2011 in phases from junior primary to senior secondary levels. Riding on the development and efficacy of the Model, the Chief Executive has announced in her 2019 Policy Address<sup>2</sup> that with effect from the 2020/21 school year, a multi-disciplinary, evidence-based and whole-school-involved ASD Project would be vigorously implemented by the EDB to enhance the support for students with ASD.

3. The ASD Project comprises 2 parts, (1) ‘School-based Multi-Disciplinary Professional

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<sup>1</sup> The ‘Tiered Autism Intervention for Students with ASD’ Model includes cultivating an ASD friendly learning environment in regular classes (Tier-1 support), providing supplemental small group training (Tier-2 support) and implementing Individual Education Plan (Tier-3 support).

<sup>2</sup> The Project would be launched after the passage of the ‘Appropriation Bill 2020’ by the Legislative Council.

Support’, and (2) ‘Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO)-School Collaboration’. Participating public sector ordinary primary and secondary schools will be assisted by the EDB in phases to deploy the AIM Model and related intervention strategies to support their students with ASD.

### **Part 1 : ‘School-based Multi-Disciplinary Professional Support’**

4. A team of multi-disciplinary professionals led by the educational psychologists of the EDB will provide 6 to 8 days per year of on-site practice-based coaching for the participating schools to conduct situated learning for teachers. Through the provision of consultation, case discussion, lesson observation and feedback, workshops and inter-school network sharing, the school personnel would be equipped to effectively deploy the AIM Model and related strategies to cater for the needs of 3 to 4 targeted students with ASD with significant difficulties. The team of professionals will also collaborate with the school personnel to design and refine the Individual Education Plans (IEPs) of the students that comprise support in 3 tiers.

5. Throughout the coaching, the team of multi-disciplinary professionals will assist schools by providing consultation on the design of IEPs with 3 tiers, participating in the IEP conferences, where appropriate, to offer professional advice, helping school personnel to plan the contents of the training sessions at Tier-2 and Tier-3 as well as giving them suggestions on the selection and deployment of effective intervention strategies, facilitating the development of the related training resources, and even demonstrating the skills and strategies for teachers as appropriate. The school personnel are required to try employing different evidence-based intervention strategies for ASD, and promote the use of them to the whole school such that more quality and appropriate support could be provided to other students with ASD. Schools are also expected to develop sustainable multifaceted measures to cater for students with ASD, enabling all teaching staff to deploy related intervention strategies with a view to moving towards a whole school approach to supporting students with ASD.

### **Responsibilities of Schools**

6. Schools participating in the ‘School-based Multi-Disciplinary Professional Support’ are required to assign the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) / Special Education Needs Support Teacher(s) (SENST) to coordinate and facilitate the overall operation of the ASD Project in order to provide comprehensive developmental, preventive and remedial support services for students with ASD, and make corresponding arrangements in teaching and manpower deployment to create room for school personnel to try out the assessment tools and intervention strategies in the Project, including:

- (i) motivating class and subject teachers to optimize whole class support strategies (Tier-1

- support) to cultivate an ASD friendly learning environment in regular classes;
- (ii) assigning designated school personnel to provide supplemental evidence-based small group training (Tier-2 support) for students with ASD in order to strengthen their social adaptive skills;
  - (iii) promoting teachers to administer assessment tools to systematically identify students' individual learning needs and design corresponding IEPs (Tier-3 support), as well as arranging designated school personnel to provide support across three tiers, including one-on-one training, for students with ASD;
  - (iv) involving related teachers and designated school personnel in students' IEP conferences so that they could collaborate on the design of the 3-tier support strategies, and evaluate students' progress regularly to inform the need to amend the IEPs, where appropriate;
  - (v) involving teachers and designated school personnel in related working meetings, professional development and inter-school network sharing activities to boost their confidence and enhance their capability to support students with ASD;
  - (vi) encouraging the school-based educational psychologist to collaborate with the team of educational psychologists of the EDB enthusiastically to ensure the sustainable development of the AIM Model at school; and
  - (vii) assigning designated school personnel to maintain close communication with parents and share with them the effective intervention strategies to foster good home-school collaboration.

## **Part 2 : 'NGO-School Collaboration'**

7. With the financial support of The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust, the 'JC A-Connect: Jockey Club Autism Support Network' (JC A-Connect) (2015/16 - 2020/21 school years) operates through a collaborative approach between NGOs and schools, drawing on the expertise of NGOs in ASD training to assist schools to provide Tier-2 support in the AIM Model, i.e. supplemental small group training on social adaptive skills for students with ASD. Having supported more than 500 primary and secondary schools, the JC A-Connect would come to an end at the close of the 2020/21 school year. In the light of the significant efficacy of the collaborative approach between NGOs and schools, we will integrate the 'NGO-School Collaboration' into the ASD Project to sustain the services delivered in the JC A-Connect. This part of the ASD Project will be rolled out in the 2021/22 school year to provide continuous support for both schools and students.

## **Application for Part 1 : ‘School-based Multi-Disciplinary Professional Support’**

8. All public sector primary and secondary schools are eligible to apply for either part or both parts of the ASD Project. The EDB is now inviting application for the first round of Part 1 of the ASD Project, i.e. a 2-year ‘School-based Multi-Disciplinary Professional Support’ from the 2020/21 to 2021/22 school year. Schools are requested to bring this circular to SENCO, SENST and supporting professionals (e.g. educational psychologists, speech therapists) for perusal. Schools which have obtained the consensus of school personnel to join the ASD Project and are willing to implement the ‘School-based Multi-Disciplinary Professional Support’ according to the requirements set out in paragraph 6 should complete and return the application form in Appendix II by fax (2416 2478) to Educational Psychology Service (New Territories West) Section on or before 20 April 2020. Owing to limited places, priority would be accorded to schools with relatively more students with ASD. The results of the application would be released in early May 2020.

9. For schools that are unable to join the ‘School-based Multi-Disciplinary Professional Support’ in the 2020/21 school year, please encourage teachers and school personnel to study the Operation Manuals and Resource Packages of the AIM Model, and seek professional advice from the school-based educational psychologist to try out the evidence-based intervention strategies for students with ASD. The Operation Manuals and Resource Packages have been distributed to schools and uploaded to the EDB website (<https://www.edb.gov.hk/tc/edu-system/special/resources/serc/autism.html>)<sup>3</sup>.

10. The EDB would issue a circular memorandum in March every year to release the details of the new round of ‘School-based Multi-Disciplinary Professional Support’, and to invite interested schools to continue to apply for the ASD Project. About 60 schools would be recruited in each round to get the 2-year support.

## **Application for Part 2 : ‘NGO-School Collaboration’**

11. Part 2 ‘NGO-School Collaboration’ of the ASD Project would be launched from the 2021/22 school year onwards. All public sector primary and secondary schools are eligible to apply and the corresponding arrangement and application procedure would be released in a circular memorandum to be issued in the 2020/21 school year.

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<sup>3</sup> The Operation Manuals and Resource Packages for primary and junior secondary school students have been distributed to schools and uploaded to the EDB website in 2015 and 2018. The ones for senior secondary school students would be distributed to schools in the second half of 2020.

## **Enquiries**

12. For enquiries, please contact Ms Eliza CHAN (phone no.: 2437 7271) or Ms LAU Suk Kau (phone no.: 2437 7290), Project Officers of Educational Psychology Service (New Territories West) Section.

Godwin LAI  
for Secretary for Education

## **Project on Whole School Approach to Providing Tiered Support for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders**

### **Background and Effectiveness**

1. Students with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) have weaknesses in emotional regulation, social communication, problem solving and classroom learning, etc. Schools in general find teaching students with ASD very challenging. In the light of this, on top of the regular services, the Education Bureau (EDB) has implemented a ‘Tiered Autism Intervention Model for Students with ASD’ (AIM Model) for junior primary to senior secondary school students with ASD in phases from 2011 to 2019, providing additional support for about 10% of the public sector ordinary primary and secondary schools. The initiative helped school personnel to try out data-and-research-driven intervention strategies to enhance the personal growth of students with ASD and at the same time, reduce the pressure of teachers and parents. In the long run, it is hoped that the potential of students with ASD could be unleashed, enabling them to integrate into society smoothly.
2. Under the AIM Model, schools employ targeted and evidence-based intervention strategies in three tiers, including supplemental small group training (Tier-2 support) and implement Individual Education Plan (Tier-3 support) to support the students with ASD develop different appropriate social adaptive skills and abilities. Furthermore, teachers would provide them with opportunities to repeatedly apply and practise the skills they have learnt at Tier-2 and Tier-3 support in regular classes (Tier-1 support) with a view to improving their adaptive skills in three aspects, namely learning, social communication and emotion, and fostering them to integrate into classroom learning and the community effectively.
3. In order to strengthen the effectiveness of Tier-2 support, the EDB is committed to promoting ‘JC A-Connect: Jockey Club Autism Support Network’ (JC A-Connect) which is led by the University of Hong Kong. Through the collaboration of the non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and schools, this scheme has offered small group training, which employs evidence-based intervention strategies, to enhance different social adaptive skills of students in more than 500 primary and secondary schools. Schools are required to assign a designated school personnel to observe and participate in the small group training activities, and employ the effective intervention strategies used in group training in classroom setting in order to help students apply the skills they have learnt in group training in regular lessons and real life and enhance their learning effectiveness. Consultation service is also provided for teachers and parents so as to equip them with the professional knowledge and skills to take care of students with ASD.

4. The educational psychologists of the EDB also contribute to a series of works in the implementation of the JC A-Connect, including review of the design of the group training activities, observe the group training in schools, conduct sharing with the coaches and school personnel, attend different quality assurance meetings to collect information about the progress of schools and students, and study the research results produced by the University of Hong Kong regarding the effectiveness of this scheme. They recognise that the JC A-Connect which adopts a collaborative approach between NGOs and schools could effectively assist the schools to develop a system and capacity to support students with ASD, creating more room for schools to implement the AIM Model. It is hence worth the while for a collaborative approach between NGOs and schools to take root at school.
  
5. In conclusion, students who are offered support in the AIM Model have shown significant improvement in social communication, emotional, learning and other aspects. The Model is also well supported by parents and schools. Therefore, the EDB has compiled the support measures and strategies in the AIM Model, which were verified to be effective for primary and junior secondary levels, into Operation Manuals and Resource Packages and they had been distributed to all primary and secondary schools in Hong Kong in 2015 and 2018 respectively.

**Project on Whole School Approach to Providing Tiered Support for  
Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)  
2020/21 to 2021/22 school year (First Round)  
'School-based Multi-Disciplinary Professional Support'  
Application Form**

Please complete the application form and return by fax (2416 2478) to Mr Kavan CHU of Educational Psychology Service (New Territories West) Section on or before **20 April 2020**.

We are interested in joining the Project on 'Whole School Approach to Providing Tiered Support for Students with ASD'--- Part 1 'School-based Multi-Disciplinary Professional Support' and have consulted our related team (including educational psychologist, Ms / Mrs / Mr \_\_\_\_\_). We will implement the Project according to the requirements set out in paragraph 6 of the circular.

In the 2019/20 school year, the number of students diagnosed to have ASD or suspected with ASD and waitlisted for assessment are as follows :

	Junior Primary			Senior Primary			Junior Secondary			Senior Secondary			Total
	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	S.1	S.2	S.3	S.4	S.5	S.6	
(i) No. of students diagnosed with ASD													
(ii) No. of students suspected to have ASD and waitlisted for assessment													
<b>Total (i)+(ii):</b>													

Contact person : \_\_\_\_\_

Post : \_\_\_\_\_

Contact number : \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address : \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of School Head : \_\_\_\_\_

Name of School Head : \_\_\_\_\_

Name of school : \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone No. : \_\_\_\_\_ Fax No. : \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address : \_\_\_\_\_

Date : \_\_\_\_\_

School Chop