

Education Bureau Circular Memorandum No. EDBCM 31/2016

From : Permanent Secretary for Education To : Supervisors / Heads of all aided and government primary schools, primary schools under the Direct Subsidy Scheme and special schools with a primary section

Ref. : EDB(CD/K&P/GS/1/(2))

Date : 15 March 2016

Provision of One-off Grant to Primary Schools for the Promotion of STEM Education

Summary

This circular memorandum sets out the details of the one-off grant for primary schools to kick-start the promotion of STEM¹ education.

Background

2. The 2015 Policy Address pledges to promote STEM education to cultivate students' learning interest, enhance their capacity to innovate, and develop their creativity and problem-solving skills. In this regard, the EDB is going to update and enrich relevant curriculum and learning activities. STEM education will be promoted among schools in a holistic and coherent manner, including enriching students' learning activities, providing suitable learning and teaching resources and enhancing teacher professional development.

Details

3. Building on school's existing curriculum development, the EDB is going to release a one-off grant for the promotion of STEM education to all government, aided and DSS primary schools, including special schools with a primary section, in the 2015/16 school year. The amount of the grant is HK\$100,000 per school. The grant aims at strengthening schools' capacity to continue improving the planning and organisation of STEM-related learning activities to foster students' inquisitive mind and promote their interest in the learning of science and technology. Schools may make use of the grant to purchase equipment/resource materials and organise related learning activities. They may deploy the grant in the following areas to meet their school-based needs:

- facilitating the kick-start of school-based STEM education;

¹ STEM is an acronym that refers to the academic disciplines of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics collectively. In the curriculum context of Hong Kong, STEM education is promoted through Science, Technology and Mathematics Education.

- equipping schools with necessary resources (e.g. teaching aids, consumables and teaching & learning resource materials), and/or upgrading some existing resources for the implementation of school-based STEM-related activities, including projects and competitions; and
- organising STEM-related activities such as school-based scientific and technological activities/competitions and supporting students to participate in various STEM-related local, national or international competitions/exhibitions/programmes.

4. Two identical seminars on “The STEM Education and e-Learning in Primary General Studies (GS)” would be organised on 12 and 13 April 2016 to share with school heads and panel chairpersons the implementation and facilitation of STEM education, including suggestions on the deployment of the grant in primary schools. Please refer to the Training Calendar System of EDB website (<http://tcs.edb.gov.hk>) for details. To help schools promote STEM education, the EDB would also continue to provide a variety of support strategies such as updating the curriculum, organising professional development programmes (PDPs), developing learning and teaching resource packages, providing exemplar design of student activities, and setting up professional exchange network.

Grant allocation / disbursement and accounting arrangement

5. The one-off grant will be disbursed to aided primary and DSS schools, including special schools with a primary section in March 2016. Schools are required to keep a separate ledger account to record all the income and expenditure chargeable to the grant. The unspent balance can be carried forward to the next year until the end of the 2017/18 school year. The EDB will claw back any unspent balance of the grant as at 31 August 2018 based on schools’ annual audited accounts.

6. For government schools, the one-off grant will be provided in the form of budget allocation in March 2016. The unspent balance can be carried forward for use until 31 August 2018. Any unspent balance as at 31 August 2018 will lapse.

7. If a deficit is incurred on the grant in any year, schools may deploy the surplus under EOEBG or the General Domain of OEBG for aided schools, or DSS Subsidy for DSS schools, or Expanded Subject and Curriculum Block Grant (ESCBG) for government schools as appropriate to cover the deficit of the grant. If there is still unsettled deficit, it should be topped up by schools’ own fund.

8. Under the principle of school-based management, schools should evaluate the effectiveness of utilising the one-off grant according to the targets set. Schools are

responsible for ensuring its effective use by conducting constant reviews on the services/resources etc. purchased.

9. In devising the STEM promotion plan, schools should discuss with teachers the strength and needs of the school to enhance STEM education in their school-based curriculum development and obtain approval from the School Management Committee (SMC) or Incorporated Management Committee (IMC). Details on the use of the grant should be included in the School Report which should be endorsed by their SMCs or IMCs and uploaded to the school's homepage before the end of November every year. A set of Guidelines on the use of the one-off grant for organising STEM-related activities is attached in the Annex for schools' reference.

Enquiry

10. For enquiries, please contact Ms SF LEUNG (Tel: 2892 5849) or Mrs Alice AU (Tel: 2892 5857) of Curriculum Development Institute.

Dr. Stephen Y W YIP
for Permanent Secretary for Education

c.c. Heads of Sections

Guidelines for the Use of the STEM education One-off Grant

1. Characteristics of STEM-related activities:

- provide opportunities for students to integrate and apply STEM-related knowledge and skills in problem-solving and creation
- with learning and teaching strategies that can facilitate students to integrate and apply STEM-related knowledge and skills
- with age-appropriate and challenging learning activities or assignments that enhance students' creativity and collaborative problem-solving skills

2. Ambit of the grant:

- facilitating the kick-start of school-based STEM education
- equipping schools with necessary resources (e.g. teaching aids, consumables and teaching & learning resource materials), and/or upgrading some existing resources for the implementation of school-based STEM related activities, including projects and competitions
- organising STEM-related activities such as school-based scientific and technological activities/competitions and supporting students in participating in various STEM-related local, national or international competitions/exhibitions/programmes

3. Procurement Arrangement:

- When hiring outside services and operating purchases, schools should observe the relevant EDB circulars and guidelines as appropriate

4. Examples of the use of one-off grant:

- For payment of activity incurred by schools (e.g. registration fee of competition, set up cost of exhibition booth)
- For costs (e.g. transportation costs, accommodation) incurred by teachers and students in participating in various STEM-related local, cross-boundary or overseas competitions
- To subsidise students who enrol on fee-charging STEM related activities/courses (e.g. computer programming, science investigations) by tertiary institution/ non-profit making organisation/ academic associations/ professional bodies.
- For the purchase of resources that can extend teachers' and students' knowledge on STEM education (e.g. books, journals, magazines and self-learning packages)
- For procurement of services from external course providers (e.g. tertiary institution/ non-profit making organisation/ academic associations/ professional bodies) to organise on-site STEM-related activities or training courses for students

5. Examples of INAPPROPRIATE use of the one-off grant

- To procure services from external service providers for organising activities in relation to non-STEM subjects
- To purchase instruments/ equipment for school administrative purposes
- To purchase computer equipment/ software devices for general purposes
- To purchase mobile computing devices
- To entertain guests at a banquet
- To purchase consumables such as flowers, fruit, baskets for celebrations in ceremonial activities
- Employment of teaching and non-teaching staff
- To subsidise teachers' tuition fees or payment of fees for local, regional and overseas STEM-related programmes