

Education Bureau Circular Memorandum No. 55/2020

From: Permanent Secretary for Education To: Heads of Government, Aided
(including Special Schools),
Caput and Direct Subsidy
Scheme (DSS) Schools

Ref: EDB(EID/ITE)/IT/PRO/189

Date: 28 May 2020

Community Care Fund Assistance Programme – Provision of Subsidy to Needy Primary and Secondary Students for Purchasing Mobile Computer Devices to Facilitate the Practice of e-Learning (Assistance Programme) (2020/21 School Year)

Summary

This circular memorandum (CM) informs schools of the details regarding the captioned programme. Schools which will implement “Bring Your Own Device” (BYOD) policy for e-learning in the 2020/21 school year are invited to participate in the programme.

Background

2. Under the Fourth Strategy on Information Technology in Education, the Education Bureau (EDB) has been promoting e-learning through the use of mobile computer devices. There is an increasing trend for schools adopting the BYOD for allowing students to bring their own mobile computer devices to schools for learning activities, so that learning could become more personalised and mobile. As the development of BYOD may create financial burden on students from low-income families, the Community Care Fund has implemented the Assistance Programme, starting from the 2018/19 school year for three years, to subsidise needy primary and secondary students studying in public sector schools to purchase mobile computer devices to facilitate the practice of e-learning.

3. e-Learning is an open and flexible learning mode. Schools can decide whether it is necessary or when for them to implement BYOD based on their contexts, e-learning needs, teachers’ professional judgment and parents’ views. Schools can also adopt different modes such as class-based, level-based or subject-

based as a starting point of implementing BYOD¹. EDB had invited schools implementing BYOD in the 2018/19 and 2019/20 school years to participate in the programme through the EDBCM No. 71/2018 and 65/2019 respectively. This CM is to invite schools which will implement BYOD for e-learning in the 2020/21 school year to participate in the programme.

Details

Eligible Beneficiaries

4. The beneficiaries of the Assistance Programme must fulfill the following requirements:

- (i) studying in government, aided (including special schools), caput, Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) primary or secondary schools; and receiving Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) from the Social Welfare Department or full grant/half grant of the School Textbook Assistance Scheme (STAS) from the Student Finance Office of the Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency; and
- (ii) studying in schools and classes implementing e-learning and adopting BYOD.

5. BYOD refers to students bringing their own mobile computer devices to schools for learning on the advice of their schools. Schools implementing BYOD should have (i) devised teaching strategies in using the device; (ii) formulated an “Acceptable Use Policy” to govern students in using the mobile computer devices in school; and (iii) advised parents to acquire mobile computer device for students to conduct e-learning through formal channels. EDB would handle applications from schools flexibly to cater for any genuine needs arising from special circumstances. In view of the fact that many schools have attempted to continue teaching via electronic platforms amid the COVID-19 outbreak, EDB accepts the applications submitted by all schools implementing e-learning for their needy students before full resumption of class. Schools may contact the Information Technology in Education Section for details regarding the BYOD requirements.

¹ Schools could visit EDB website (www.edb.gov.hk/ited/byod) for enhancing their understanding of and assessing reference materials on implementing BYOD.

Use of Subsidy

6. The funding could be used to cover the cost of the following items only:
 - (i) the mobile computer device;
 - (ii) a mobile device management system to be installed on the device;
 - (iii) basic accessories, depending on the needs for learning, including screen shield, protective cover, detachable keyboard, stylus pen and mouse²; and
 - (iv) three-year basic warranty.

Level of subsidy

7. For students in receipt of CSSA/full grant, the subsidy will be provided to cover the full cost of the device and the items mentioned in paragraph 6 above. For each eligible student, there is a maximum level of the subsidy provided which will be adjusted annually according to the movement of the Composite Consumer Price Index. In the 2020/21 school year, the maximum subsidy for students receiving CSSA/full grant is \$ 4,740. For students receiving half grant, the subsidy is half of the actual cost of the items up to \$2,370.

8. During the three-year implementation period, each eligible student can receive the subsidy once for purchase of a mobile computer device which will be owned by the student. The subsidy cannot be put to other uses. When a student beneficiary is promoted to a secondary school or has changed to a new school using a different device and the original device could not meet the learning needs in the new school, the beneficiary could then be provided an additional subsidy for purchasing a new device. In such case, the student concerned is required to return the used device to the original school which may then use the device for teaching or on loan to other needy students transferred in during the school year. Schools and students may refer to the EDB website (<https://www.edb.gov.hk/ited/ccfap/changeschool>) for details of the arrangement.

² Schools should consult EDB in advance if additional items are required to be covered by the subsidy due to specific learning needs.

Application and Disbursement Arrangements

9. When implementing BYOD, it has been a common practice that schools would determine the device specifications according to their pedagogical design, use of e-learning tools and resources, students' learning needs as well as parents' affordability. To ensure students acquire a suitable device as required, the subsidy will be disbursed to participating schools for purchasing devices for their students.

10. Schools that will implement BYOD in the 2020/21 school year are invited to participate in the Assistance Programme by completing the attached Application Form (**Annex II**) and returning it to EDB by **29 January 2021**. Participating schools of the 2018/19 and/or 2019/20 school year(s) are also required to return the Application Form to EDB before the above deadline if they are going to join the programme in the 2020/21 school year. To facilitate schools' procurement of devices for students' early use in e-learning, EDB will disburse provisional funding to schools if they could return their applications on or before **24 July 2020**. The provisional funding will be calculated based on the estimated number of eligible students in the Application Form and disbursed by end-August 2020.

11. In September 2020, EDB will provide participating schools a template for returning the information of devices purchased and actual student beneficiaries. School should return the information to EDB for funding adjustment when the procurement procedures³ are completed. If the actual subsidy required is more than the provisional funding disbursed, or for schools that have not received the provisional funding, supplementary/actual funding will be provided normally within two months after schools' return of the completed information. All participating schools are required to complete the procurement procedures, vet students' eligibility and return the information by **end-April 2021** so that the funding adjustment would be completed before the end of the school year. Details of the funding arrangements will be issued under a separate cover in due course.

12. In case schools need to apply for further funding adjustment after submission of the template mentioned in paragraph 11 due to various reasons, for example, acquiring devices for new eligible students, schools can re-submit the template with updated information by end-April 2021 to revise the funding requirement for the 2020/21 school year. A working timetable summarising the arrangement of application and funding disbursement is attached at **Annex I** for easy reference.

³ Procurement procedures include (i) conducting quotation/tender exercise(s); (ii) signing agreement(s) with supplier(s); (iii) distributing the devices to student beneficiaries; and (iv) receiving the invoice(s)/payment receipt(s) from supplier(s).

Accounting Arrangements

13. Participating schools should validate its expenditure in the Assistance Programme and return a financial report covering the period from 1 September 2020 to 30 June 2021 to the Information Technology in Education Section of EDB by end-June 2021. Transfer of funds out of the Assistance Programme is not allowed. Surplus, if any, could not be carried forward to the next school year. In this regard, EDB will claw back any surplus at the end of the school year, based on the financial report provided by the school.

14. The relevant funding for the Assistance Programme should be deployed for the specific purpose and participating schools should compile a separate ledger account to record all the income and expenditure chargeable to the Assistance Programme. Schools are also required to keep records, including original official receipts and related documents. In addition to the amount of expenditure, the list of benefitted students and the expenditure items should be provided to EDB for audit purposes. Aided (including special schools), caput and DSS schools should observe the requirements as stipulated in the relevant circulars and letters calling for preparation and submission of audited annual accounts. For government schools, the funding will be disbursed in the form of an allocation. The expenditure should be charged to a designated deposit account and should not exceed the allocation in the respective school year. Any unspent balance of the allocation will not be carried forward to the following school year. In case of deficit as a result of the cost of items purchased for each beneficiary being higher than the maximum level of subsidy, schools should use non-government funding to cover the deficit. All schools should refer to the prevailing ordinances, regulations and circulars in handling matters related to procurement of goods and services and handling of accounts, etc.

Submission of Application and Enquiry

15. Interested schools are required to submit the completed Application Form by mail to the following address or by fax (Fax no.: 2382 4403):

Information Technology in Education Section, Education Bureau
Room E420, 4/F, East Block
EDB Kowloon Tong Education Services Centre
19 Suffolk Road, Kowloon Tong, Kowloon

16. Schools can visit the website <https://www.edb.gov.hk/ited/ccfap> to obtain more information including frequently asked questions, information leaflet, relevant reference documents and professional development programmes. Besides, schools are welcome to view an introductory video at https://bit.ly/CCFAP2020-21_video for better understanding of the arrangement in applying to the programme. For enquiries, please contact the Information Technology in Education Section at 3698 3670 or 3698 4149.

(Y T LAU)
for Permanent Secretary for Education

c.c. Heads of Sections – for information

**Community Care Fund Assistance Programme –
Provision of Subsidy to Needy Primary and Secondary Students for
Purchasing Mobile Computer Devices to Facilitate the Practice of e-Learning**

Working Timetable for the 2020/21 School Year

Task	Period	Remarks
(i) Returning the Application Form	From June 2020 to 29 January 2021	Provisional funding is disbursed to schools if they have returned the Application Form and provided EDB the estimated number of eligible students by 24 July 2020 .
(ii) Disbursing provisional funding by EDB	End-August 2020	
(iii) Conducting the procurement exercise	School-based arrangement	All procurement procedures ³ should be completed by April 2021, and payment must be settled within the 2020/21 school year.
(iv) Returning information of devices purchased and beneficiaries	From September 2020 to end-April 2021	A template will be provided by EDB for schools to input the information.
(v) Disbursing supplementary funding/actual funding by EDB	Normally within two months after completion of (iv)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For schools which have received provisional funding, EDB will disburse supplementary funding if the actual cost is higher than the provisional funding. • For schools which have not received provisional funding, EDB will disburse the actual funding to schools.
(vi) Returning financial report	June 2021	Based on the financial report, EDB will claw back any surplus by the end of the school year.

Community Care Fund Assistance Programme – Provision of Subsidy to Needy Primary and Secondary Students for Purchasing Mobile Computer Devices to Facilitate the Practice of e-Learning (Assistance Programme)

Application Form (2020/21 School Year)
(Please return on or before 29 January 2021 by mail or by fax)

To: IT in Education Section, Education Bureau (Fax: 2382 4403)

My school will implement “Bring Your Own Device” (BYOD) policy for e-learning in the 2020/21 school year and would like to participate in the Assistance Programme, in accordance with the requirements stated in the Education Bureau CM No. 55/2020. Details are as follows: (Please fill in all information in block letter, put a ✓ in the appropriate box and delete whichever is inapplicable where marked with *)

Part A: School Particulars

School Name: _____

School Code: _____

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School Type: Primary Secondary Special

Finance Type: Government Aided Caput
 Direct Subsidy Scheme

School Contact: Tel: _____ Fax: _____ Email: _____

Address: _____

Teacher In-charge: Name (English) : *Mr/Ms _____
Name (Chinese) : _____ Post Title: _____
Tel: _____ Email : _____

Part B: Implementation Details

(1) The implementation position of my school is as follows:

My school has already participated in this programme in the 2018/19 and/or 2019/20 school year(s) and will continue to implement BYOD in the 2020/21 school year. (Please go to Part B (2))

OR

My school will implement BYOD for e-learning, and it is the first time for my school to participate in the programme in the 2020/21 school year.

(a) My school has advised parents to acquire mobile computer device for students to conduct e-learning in my school via the following channel(s):

2020/21 Textbook List School Circular/School Letter

School Website Others (Please Specify) _____

(b) My school has established “Acceptable Use Policy”¹ for students’ use of mobile computer devices in learning.

¹ “Acceptable Use Policy” is a policy for governing students’ use of mobile computer device, wireless network and information, listing out acceptable and unacceptable acts.

