

EDUCATION BUREAU CIRCULAR MEMORANDUM No. 209/2023

From: Secretary for Education

To: Heads of government, aided, caput and Direct

Ref.: EDB(EPS/K1)/1-50/1

Subsidy Scheme primary and secondary schools

Date: 9 November 2023

c.c. Heads of sections – for information

“Mental Health@School” Measures for Promotion of Students’ Mental Health

Summary

This circular memorandum informs primary and secondary schools of the measures and recommendations put forward by the Education Bureau (EDB) to promote mental health at schools, and to identify and support students with mental health needs in the 2023/24 school year. Active participation of schools is encouraged.

Background

2. School is a place that promotes students’ whole-person development, where students express care, concern, support and respect for each other. Schools have always been catering for students’ various developmental needs and striving to build a strong safety net for them through a whole-school approach. The epidemic has brought to our society unprecedented challenges in the past few years. As schooling and social life resume normality, it takes time for students to gradually adapt to all the changes. In particular, we must not under-estimate students’ pressure in facing tests and examinations. EDB will work with all stakeholders to promote the mental health of students, teachers, and parents, and to increase the protective factors and reduce the risk factors for students’ mental health.

Details

3. EDB will put in place the following series of measures to safeguard students’ mental health with schools and parents.

(1) “Mental Health Literacy” Resource Packages

4. In order to strengthen students’ understanding of mental health and to assist schools to promote mental health literacy, EDB will launch the “Mental Health Literacy” resource packages (hereinafter referred to as the resource packages) suitable for upper primary students and junior secondary students in

the 2023/24 school year. The development of the resource packages for lower primary and senior secondary levels are underway. Among them, **the resource package for upper primary levels has been uploaded to the “Mental Health@School” website** for teachers’ reference and deployment. Schools can access the website via the link or QR code below to download the resource package for upper primary levels.

“Mental Health Literacy (Key Stage 2) Resource Package” designated webpage:

<https://mentalhealth.edb.gov.hk/tc/promotion-at-the-universal-level/promotional-resources-for-schools/110.html>

(Chinese version only)



5. The content of the resource package includes four areas, namely (i) means to maintain good mental health; (ii) understanding mental illnesses and effective treatments, (iii) destigmatisation of help-seeking and people with mental illness; and (iv) encouraging peers to seek help when they have mental health needs, which will be useful to teachers and school personnel as they promote mental health literacy in class. We encourage all primary schools to allocate class time to teach mental health literacy in a systematic manner, with reference to the content of the resource package. This will help students gain a proper understanding of mental health, adopt positive and inclusive attitudes, and enhance their own and their friends' psychological well-being.

6. To help schools understand how to make good use of the resource package, EDB will conduct a training workshop on 7 December 2023 to introduce its design rationale and teaching ideas, and to share how to use the resource package to promote students’ mental health and reduce the risk factors that causing disturbances to students’ mental health. Primary school principals, vice-principals, guidance teachers and school social workers are cordially invited to attend the workshop. Priority will be given to the nominated teachers on the “Mental Health@School” Teacher Professional Network. Detailed information on the workshop will be announced at a later time. Please pay close attention to the “Mental Health@School” Teacher Professional Network email or EDB Training Calendar System.

7. Besides, to enhance primary school students’ psychological resilience, EDB has produced a picture book titled “The Three Chocolate Challenges”. It aims to help teachers and parents cultivate students’ growth mindset in a simple and accessible way. It guides them to cope with developmental challenges positively and to view setbacks as opportunities for learning and growth. EDB has uploaded the picture book to the “Mental Health@School” website and will be distributing the hardcopy to all primary schools. Schools will be notified separately of the collection arrangement of the book.

(2) **“Spread the Love, Care and Shine” Campaign**

8. To facilitate schools in building an inclusive and caring culture, and to strengthen students’ adaptive ability and stress resistance in order to actively cope with their personal developmental challenges, EDB appeals to all schools in the territory to launch the **“Spread the Love, Care and Shine” Campaign** within November 2023. Schools are encouraged to refer to the reference and activity materials provided by EDB to organise various school-based and class-based mental health promotion activities for students. To this effect, EDB has launched the “Spread the Love, Care and Shine” Campaign designated webpage on which we put together relevant key messages and activity suggestions for schools’ easy reference:

“Spread the Love, Care and Shine” Campaign designated webpage:

<https://mentalhealth.edb.gov.hk/tc/promotion-at-the-universal-level/promotional-resources-for-schools/112.html>

(Chinese version only)



Mental Health Day(s)

9. Schools are encouraged to organise “Mental Health Day(s)” within November 2023. It could be a one-day or multiple-day event. Depending on the school contexts, students and parents’ needs, schools can refer to the information and activity examples on the “Spread the Love, Care and Shine” Campaign designated webpage to arrange lessons or whole-school activities on promotion of mental health to guide students to cope with pressure and face difficulties with a positive attitude, and to care for their own physical and mental well-being.

Review School Assessments, Tests and Examinations, and Time-table Arrangement

10. EDB suggests schools to prioritise the protection of students’ well-being and be vigilant of their mental health. Schools should review students’ homework load and their assessment arrangements, make necessary adjustments in a practical and professional manner as well as taking students’ abilities and needs into account. Schools should also ensure that students have sufficient rest time and space for healthy activities in order to alleviate their stress. EDB also suggests schools to seriously review their lesson time-tables to ensure students have sufficient rest and relaxation time at school. It is stipulated in the documents on the operation of whole-day schools that, given usual circumstances, students spend approximately 7 hours on average in school every day, during which there should be two recesses (20 minutes each) and a lunch break of about an hour. Sufficient time for rest and relaxation can promote students’ healthy development as well as increase opportunities for teacher-student interaction and communication, fostering

their relationship. We appeal to all secondary and primary schools to take the advice in reviewing their current time-tables, or consider extending the recess time and lunch time during certain specific periods (such as before in-school tests and examinations), so that students will have sufficient time for rest and interaction with peers and teachers, thus enhancing their sense of connectedness.

Enhance Class-based Support

11. Schools are not only a place for learning, but also crucial pillars for student growth, and the role of class teachers is particularly important in this regard. Schools should reinforce the class teachers' role and encourage them to foster the sense of connectedness at class level and promote students' well-being by increasing their protective factors. Schools should ensure that teachers and students have the time and opportunities for interaction and sharing, so to create a school culture that treasures communication, trust and love. Through building a more intimate and trusting relationship between teachers and students, students will be more willing to express their emotions and seek help from their class teachers, thus reinforcing their safety net.

12. EDB urges schools to implement the following class-based activities:

- (i) **Put up “Spread the Love, Care and Shine” e-posters and distribute small tips cards:** EDB has prepared “Spread the Love, Care and Shine” e-posters and small tips cards for schools. They provide tips on self-care, emotion-regulation, as well as information on how to seek help. Schools are encouraged to download and print the “Spread the Love, Care and Shine” e-posters and small tips cards from the “Mental Health@School” website. The posters can be put up in every classroom, corridor and other prominent locations. Class teachers can distribute the small tips cards and explain the content to the students. They should remind students to care for their emotional needs, love themselves and seek help proactively.
- (ii) **Practice relaxation exercises:** Class teachers can practice relaxation with students regularly or on a daily basis, making use of the relaxation exercise video clips on the “Spread the Love, Care and Shine” Campaign designated webpage (including the “Lazy 8 Breathing”, “Progressive Muscle Relaxation Exercise” and “7-11 Breathing Exercise”), mindful breathing voice navigation or other relevant resources, to promote self-care to students. Class teachers can also send the e-posters and relaxation exercise video clips to students and parents via electronic platforms for their practice.

- (iii) **Implement a variety of class-based activities:** Class teachers are encouraged to boost their interaction and increase sharing opportunities with students by organising more class-based activities, thus strengthening students' sense of connectedness. The design of the activities should be able to engage all students, such as allowing groups of students to take turns in arranging activities in the weekly assemblies, designing bulletin boards for various festivities and displaying all students' work. It should be emphasised that all works are treated with respect and all students are each a part of the group. Moreover, class teachers can hold activities from time to time to create collective memories, such as birthday parties, thanksgiving activities, celebrations after class competitions or midterm examinations. Class teachers can adopt more creative ideas such as celebrating the return to school of a student who has been absent for a week, or the handing in of homework of the whole class. Class teachers can also refer to the class-based activities suggestions provided by EDB on the "Spread the Love, Care and Shine" Campaign designated webpage.

Create a Relaxing and Caring School Campus

13. Environmental setting is an important element in building a caring campus. Schools are encouraged to set up a Mental Health Corner/Room in the classroom or school (the room can be called the "Mental Health Station", "Peaceful Corner", "Relaxation Room", etc.). It can provide a space for students to feel secured, help them relieve stress, and take care of their emotional needs whenever necessary. Schools can invite students to participate in the design and decoration of the Mental Health Corner/Room, thereby letting them feel valued and having their preferences acknowledged. Please refer to the "Spread the Love, Care and Shine" Campaign designated webpage for more ideas on setting up of the Mental Health Corner/Room.

"Small Gestures for Greater Love"

14. Small gestures can often spread care and warmth to oneself and others. Students can be taught to give themselves "Butterfly Hugs", which can reinforce their sense of security and calm their emotions. Besides, schools can encourage all school personnel and students to greet each other with heartwarming gestures, such as various hearts and support gestures. Through these simple actions, they can express their care and support to each other. Schools can also suggest students to be more creative in designing class-specific / form-specific / school-specific gestures through competitions. Through creating students-designed gestures, a relaxing atmosphere can be created at which students can feel their companions' support and warmth, thereby promoting self-care as well as caring for others, which will increase one's sense of happiness. Please refer to the "Spread the Love, Care and Shine" Campaign designated webpage for more examples of "Small Gestures for Greater Love".

One-off Grant for Mental Health at School

15. In order to support schools to promote mental health effectively and flexibly, EDB will be providing the “Mental Health@School One-off Grant” to all publicly-funded primary and secondary schools (including special schools). Each school will be provided with a one-off grant of \$60,000. Schools can utilise the grant flexibly within the 2023/24 and 2024/25 school years to organise activities or purchase services or materials which are related to the promotion of mental health for students and teachers. For example, schools can use the grant for stress management workshops, emotional regulation groups for students, or purchase materials for the “Mental Health Corner” or “Mental Health Room”. Details regarding the One-off Grant for Mental Health at School will be released later.

Promotion of Values of Gratitude and Treasuring

16. Taking note of the positive people and things around us, and learning to be grateful for and cherish what we have in the present, can contribute to promoting mental well-being. Therefore, EDB suggests that schools cultivate students’ sense of gratitude through daily teaching and interaction, so to enhance their sense of happiness and feelings of joy. Visit the link or scan the QR code below to find out more relevant information on the designated webpage “My Pledge to Act - Be grateful and treasure what we have, stay positive and optimistic”.

My Pledge to Act - Be grateful and treasure what we have, stay positive and optimistic (2023/24):

<https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/curriculum-development/4-key-tasks/moral-civic/mpa2023/mpa2023-1.html>



Promotion of Sports

17. Physical activities not only develop students’ sports skills and enhance their physical fitness, but they also effectively increase their happiness index and promote mental well-being. Schools can increase students’ physical activity time through sports activities both inside or outside the classroom. Schools can visit the following link or scan the QR code for more information on the “Active Students, Active People” Campaign website.

“Active Students, Active People” Campaign:

<https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/curriculum-development/kla/pe/asap/index.html>



(3) Parent Education

18. Family is of utmost importance to student development. Many studies found that there is a close association between adolescents’ self-image and mental health and their families’ functioning. Young

people's emotions change according to their parents' behavior, and they are very sensitive to their parents' reactions. Parental stress is therefore a big risk factor in children and adolescents' mental health. For this reason, parents need to take care of their own physical and mental health, get sufficient rest and time for relaxation, as well as participate in parent-child education talks or courses in order to grasp the necessary knowledge and skills in parenting.

Parent Talks

19. To enhance parental support to students, EDB will co-organise parent **webinars** on **21 and 22 November 2023** and **face-to-face parent talks** on **9 December 2023** with the Committee on Home-School Co-operation, Federations of Parent-Teacher Associations and regional school heads associations. Please refer to **Annex 1** for details of the webinars and face-to-face parent talks. Parents' active participation is encouraged.

One-off Grant for Mental Health of Parents and Students

20. To support parents in taking care of students' mental health, EDB will provide the "One-off Grant for Mental Health of Parents and Students" of \$20,000 to the Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) of all publicly-funded primary and secondary schools (including special schools). We encourage schools to collaborate with their PTAs in utilising the grant in the 2023/24 and 2024/25 school years to organise parent education activities in support of students' mental health development and in building positive cultures at home. Relevant details will be released in due course.

(4) "Gatekeeper" Training

21. In order to early identify students with mental health needs and suicidal risks, EDB has been committed to providing gatekeeper training for teachers, parents and students. Regarding school personnel, in order to enhance the knowledge and skills of teachers and guidance personnel in identifying and supporting students with social anxiety disorder, EDB will organise an online seminar on "Identifying and Supporting Students with Social Anxiety Disorder" on **24 November 2023**, featuring sharing by psychiatrist, psychiatric nurse and educational psychologist from EDB. Teachers and guidance personnel can enrol in the seminar through EDB Training Calendar System **on or before 15 November 2023** (Course ID: SE0020230252).

22. In addition, to strengthen school personnel's early identification and support of students with mental health needs, EDB will provide a series of intensive workshops for teachers and school guidance personnel (e.g. social workers and school-based educational psychologists) this school year, with the focus on enhancing their knowledge and skills in caring for students with mental health needs. Relevant details will be announced in due course.

23. Regarding parents, EDB will organise a total of 12 sessions of “Parent Workshops on Gatekeeper Training” in the 2023/24 school year. Clinical psychologists will be invited to deliver the gatekeeper training programme for parents of all primary and secondary schools. Additionally, two thematic gatekeeper workshops will be launched, while two parent education videos related to promoting students’ mental health will be produced and uploaded to the “Mental Health@School” and “Parent Smart Net” websites for parents’ reference. Schools are also encouraged to re-distribute tips, factsheets and pamphlets produced by EDB for parents, such as the pamphlets introducing different mental illnesses (including depression and anxiety disorders) and “Safeguard Children’s Mental Health - Prevent Youth Suicide” – Factsheet for Parents. Relevant resources are available in different languages to enhance parents’ early identification and support of students with mental health needs.

Positive Vibes @ Home - Thematic Online Workshops on Parent Gatekeeper Training

<https://mentalhealth.edb.gov.hk/en/support-programmes/parent-workshop-on-gatekeeper-training.html>



“Caring for Children's Mental Health” Parent Education Series – Pamphlets

<https://mentalhealth.edb.gov.hk/en/support-at-the-indicated-level/resources-and-guidelines/67.html>



“Safeguard Children’s Mental Health - Prevent Youth Suicide” – Factsheet for Parents

<https://mentalhealth.edb.gov.hk/en/promotion-at-the-universal-level/parent-zone/68.html>



24. Regarding students, EDB will continue to commission non-governmental organisations to organise gatekeeper training under the “Peer Power – Student Gatekeeper Training Programme” to train students to become “peer leaders”, with the objective to enhance their understanding of mental health and skills of dealing with their own stress and emotions, to equip them with skills to identify and respond to peers in need, and to promote a school culture that is proactive in facing problems and seeking help. We encourage schools that have not yet participated to arrange for their students to join the program as soon as possible.

(5) Utilising EDB and Community Resources

25. We encourage schools to refer to “A Resource Handbook for Schools: Detecting, Supporting and Making Referral for Students with Suicidal Behaviours” published by EDB to empower teachers to early identify students with emotional concerns and refer them to professional support. In supporting schools

to promote mental health literacy and support students with mental health needs, EDB has compiled relevant services provided by various organisations for schools' reference. Please see **Annex 2** for details.

A Resource Handbook for Schools: Detecting, Supporting and Making Referral
for Students with Suicidal Behaviours

https://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/teacher/prevention-of-student-suicides/Resource_Handbook_for_Schools_En.pdf



26. EDB will update the information on “Mental Health@School” website from time to time, integrate relevant items and quick links, to facilitate schools, parents and students to access to the relevant online information provided by EDB and other organisations. Schools can find more details via the link or QR code below:

Community Resources and Helplines

<https://mentalhealth.edb.gov.hk/en/early-identification-at-the-selective-level/helplines-and-community-resources.html>



Enquiries

27. For enquiries, please contact Ms Mandy YEUNG of the Educational Psychology Service (Kowloon 1) at 3698 4311.

Ms Mandy HO
for Secretary for Education

Annex 1: Registration Details of Online and Face-to-Face Parent Talks

Annex 2: Resources Related to Mental Health

Online and Face-to-Face Parent Talks**1. Parent Talk (to be conducted in real-time online)**

To enhance parental support to children, EDB will organise the following online parent talks.

Parents can register the talk from 9 November to 17 November 2023.

The registration link is as follows:

<https://forms.gle/NMvX9kbiP7965rat5>



Date: 21 November 2023 (Tuesday) [for primary schools] and
22 November 2023 (Wednesday) [for secondary schools]

Time: 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Mode: Real-time online via Zoom

Target participants: Parents

| Time | Topic | Organisation |
|-------------|---|---|
| 19:00-19:15 | Registration | |
| 19:15-20:00 | Effective measures and case sharing to identify and support children with mental health needs | “Open Up” – Jockey Club Online Youth Emotional Support Platform |
| 20:00-20:45 | Adolescents’ misconceptions towards life | The Samaritan Befrienders Hong Kong |
| 20:45-21:00 | Q & A session | |

2. Parent Talk (to be conducted face-to-face)

To enhance parental support to children, the EDB will organise the following online parent talks. Parents can register the talk from 9 November to 3 December 2023.

The registration link is as follows:

<https://forms.gle/gQt6mwFKeyYzTpOi9>



Date: 9 December 2023 (Saturday)
 Time: 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. [for secondary schools] and
 1:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. [for primary schools]
 Venue : P.H.C. Wing Kwong College (155 Lung Cheung Road, Wang Tau Hom)
 Target participants: Parents

| Time (Secondary) | Topic | Speaker |
|-------------------------|--|--|
| 10:15-10:30 | Registration | |
| 10:30-11:30 | Mindful Parenting | Mr Denis KWAN Educational Psychologist Jockey Club “Peace and Awareness” |
| 11:30-12:15 | Coping the Challenges of Children’s Growth | Mr Jeff KEI Clinical Psychologist Baptist Oi Kwan Social Service |
| 12:15-12:30 | Q & A session | |
| Time (Primary) | Topic | Speaker |
| 13:15-13:30 | Registration | |
| 13:30-14:30 | Mindful Parenting | Mr Denis KWAN Educational Psychologist Jockey Club “Peace and Awareness” |
| 14:30-15:15 | Preparing Children for Growth in Adversity | Ms Doris LAM Clinical Psychologist Baptist Oi Kwan Social Service |
| 15:15-15:30 | Q & A session | |

References and Resources Related to Mental Health

1. Community Resources and Helplines

If students are at risk of mental health problems, teachers or school personnel may help them look for professional support services in the community.

https://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/student-parents/crisis-management/helpline-community-resources/community-resources-and-helpline_e.pdf



2. “Mental Health@School” Website

Teachers or school personnel are encouraged to refer to the following website to take care of students’ mental health needs.

<https://mentalhealth.edb.gov.hk/en/index.html>



- (a) Promotional Resources on “Self-care Promotes Well-being”

<https://mentalhealth.edb.gov.hk/tc/promotion-at-the-universal-level/promotional-resources-for-schools/106.html> (Chinese version only)



- (b) Resources for Coping with Exam Stress

<https://mentalhealth.edb.gov.hk/en/promotion-at-the-universal-level/promotional-resources-for-schools/83.html>



- (c) Understanding and Supporting Students with Self-harm Behaviours

<https://mentalhealth.edb.gov.hk/tc/early-identification-at-the-selective-level/resources-and-guidelines/90.html> (Chinese version only)



3. EDB – Smart Parent Net

“Parent Smart Net” is an educational information website for parents. It enables parents with children from kindergarten to primary and secondary school levels to easily access useful information on supporting the physical and mental development of students. It includes information on parent-child relationship, parenting skills, children’s mental health, etc.

<https://www.parent.edu.hk/en/home>



4. Online Support Platforms

(a) **Headwind** – mental health online platform

Mainly supports people with emotional distress and provides related services, including free mental health consultation.

<https://www.youthmentalhealth.hku.hk/> (Chinese version only)



(b) **“Open Up”** – 24-hour online platform

A 24-hour online emotional counseling platform designed specifically for people aged 11 to 35. Through text messaging and connecting via social media, youth’s views can be heard.

<https://www.openup.hk/en-us>



(c) **Caritas Infinity Teens** – Cyber Youth Support Team

Provides online outreach service for young people aged 6-24 with developmental needs and who are active online.

<https://it.caritas.org.hk/> (Chinese version only)



(d) **“Nite Cat Online”** – The Boys’ & Girls’ Clubs Association of Hong Kong

Uses information and communication technology tools to provide counselling services, training on digital creativity and talent development for youth in disadvantaged conditions.

<https://nitecat.bgca.org.hk/> (Chinese version only)



(e) **Jockey Club Electronic Clinic for Psychological Service (JC eClinic)** – funded by the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust, organised by New Life Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association

Provides free online psychological treatment courses delivered by professional therapists, targeting people aged 15 to 35 who are disturbed by depression and anxiety problems. This project adopts evidence-based “Unified Protocol, UP”, including an adult version and a version for adolescents in school. The online platform provides rich online materials. The trained therapists also accompany service users throughout the treatment journey. The interview time and mode are flexible.

<https://eclinic.hk/> (Chinese version only)



5. Other Related Websites

Shall We Talk

<https://www.shallwetalk.hk/en/>



LevelMind@JC

<https://www.levelmind.hk/>



Jockey Club eGPS Psychological Support Project

<https://en.egps.hk/mental-well-being-info>



Jockey Club Project Well-being Online Resources Bank and Search Engine

<https://jcprojectwellbeing.hk/resources.php>



Jockey Club “Peace and Awareness” Mindfulness Culture in Schools Initiative

<https://www.socsc.hku.hk/jcpanda/jcpanda-initiative/?lang=en>



Newlife 330 Self-care Exercise

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EID0MIRB4qQ&t=1>

(Chinese version only)



“Wellbeing-First School” Thematic Network Project

<https://wellbeingfirstschool.hku.hk/> (Chinese version only)



The Samaritan Befrienders Hong Kong

https://sbhk.org.hk/?page_id=32063&lang=en

