

Education Bureau Circular Memorandum No. 20/2017

From: Secretary for Education

To: Heads of Primary Schools

(excluding ESF and
International Schools)

Date: 23 January 2017

Basic Competency Assessment Research Study

(Note: This circular memorandum should be read by Heads of primary schools, excluding ESF and International Schools, for necessary action.)

Purpose

The purpose of this circular memorandum is to inform schools of the arrangements for the implementation of the Basic Competency Assessment Research Study in 2017.

Background

2. The Coordinating Committee on Basic Competency Assessment and Assessment Literacy (the Committee) submitted its report on the overall review of TSA to the Education Bureau (EDB) in February 2016, which reaffirmed the intent and value of the establishment of TSA and recognised the functional use of TSA data to provide feedback to learning and teaching and help formulate measures to support learning. For TSA at Primary 3, the Committee considered that the assessment papers and question design should be adjusted, and that the reports distributed to schools could adopt different formats. Such initiatives should be implemented as a tryout arrangement in 2016 with a view to collecting and reviewing feedback.

3. The Committee reviewed the implementation of the four new initiatives for enhancement (including improving the assessment papers and question design, enhancing school reports, strengthening diversified professional support measures, and including a questionnaire survey on students' learning attitude and motivation) under the 2016 Tryout Study (Primary 3) and recommended extending the Tryout Study to primary schools in the territory in 2017, so that more schools are able to understand the new initiatives through participation. Accordingly, the Committee and the EDB could receive more comprehensive feedback to continue to review and enhance the arrangements for TSA.

4. According to the feedback collected as well as the experience of participating

schools, the aforementioned four new initiatives could effectively address public concerns, including removing the incentives for over-drilling caused by TSA; alleviating stakeholders' concerns about the stakes involved; and deepening mutual trust among schools, parents and stakeholders to enhance assessment literacy. The EDB accepted the recommendations made in the Committee's report on the Tryout Study submitted on 9 December 2016 to promote the new initiatives for enhancement under the Tryout Study to primary schools in the territory in 2017. In this way, more schools are able to understand the new initiatives through participation and the Committee and the EDB could receive more comprehensive feedback to continue reviewing and enhancing the arrangements for TSA for the promotion of quality education. The report has been uploaded to the EDB website at <http://www.edb.gov.hk/en/curriculum-development/assessment/about-assessment/assessment-for-learning.html>.

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5. Please refer to EDB Circular Memorandum No. 82/2016 for the dates of assessments under the Basic Competency Assessment Research Study and adjust the school calendar as appropriate and inform parents accordingly. Details of the arrangements for support measures for schools will be announced later. The Committee would continue to advise on the implementation and evaluation of the study.

6. The experience of schools participating in the 2016 Tryout Study showed that through enhanced communication, different stakeholders could grasp the function and value of TSA and have better understanding of the concept of "assessment for learning". In participating in the Basic Competency Assessment Research Study, should schools encounter special circumstances or difficulties, the Regional Education Offices of EDB will look into the matters and provide assistance.

7. While the new initiatives for enhancement are able to effectively eliminate the incentives for drilling caused by TSA, the EDB and the Committee are still concerned about the possible presence of drilling culture in some schools. Therefore, we have to reiterate that the quality of homework is more important than the quantity. The modes and contents of homework should cater for the learning needs and abilities of students, and teachers need to help students consolidate and extend their learning based on their established foundation. Mechanical drills, repetitive copying and rote learning should be avoided. Meanwhile, schools should consider more comprehensively and fully the diversity of students at different learning stages, such as age, gender, physical development/condition, social development, learning abilities and needs, interests,

family background and expectations, and community and cultural contexts, for the purpose of designing diversified and appropriate homework for students. This will ensure that students have sufficient time to rest and relax after completing homework and study to ensure a balanced physical and psychological development.

8. The EDB would like to thank the schools for their continuous efforts in promoting quality education. We will continue to work together with the schools to facilitate students' learning, helping them embrace the challenges ahead with a positive and proactive attitude and achieve the goal of lifelong learning and whole-person development.

Enquiries

9. For enquiries, please contact the following persons:

Enquiry on implementation of the Basic Competency Assessment Research Study (subjects):

Dr Tenny LAM of the HKEAA at 3628 8100

Enquiry on administrative arrangements of the Basic Competency Assessment Research Study:

Ms Fanstina TSE of the HKEAA at 3628 8181

Enquiry on general policy of the Basic Competency Assessment Research Study:

Ms Eunice CHAN of the Education Bureau at 2921 8943

Ms Jenny CHAN
for Secretary for Education

cc: Heads of Sections – for information