

## 9. CONCLUSION

### ***What has been accomplished in TSA 2006?***

The TSA was extended to Secondary 3 students for the first time this year. In order to enable secondary schools to become familiar with the ideas underpinning the TSA and the specific arrangements for assessing students' basic competencies, seminars were organised. They covered both subject matter (including sample items and scoring guides) and assessment administration. Materials for these seminars were posted so that they could be downloaded from the TSA website.

The same '1 + 1' arrangement continued in primary speaking assessments, with speaking tasks being assessed by one internal and one external assessor. This practice alleviated pressure on students since one of the assessors was familiar to them and the involvement of an external assessor ensured the objectivity of the assessment process. In each participating secondary school, two external oral assessors were recruited to conduct and rate the students' performances. This practice was well received in secondary schools. It helped students to overcome their self-consciousness and to talk in front of strangers, which is good preparation for their Secondary 5 public examinations.

Centralised marking of the written papers was undertaken and a team of 1,000 markers and 100 check-markers worked for a period of two weeks under the close supervision of HKEAA staff. This practice has been widely accepted by teachers and proven successful. Markers were carefully monitored by check-markers to ensure the quality of marking and to guard against missing scripts.

TSA 2006 results were released in October, six weeks in advance of the date originally planned, as schools had requested TSA results earlier. The HKEAA has given high priority to streamlining the existing process to improve the speed, accuracy and delivery of school results.

As per requests by schools joining *Integrated Education*, two TSA 2006 reports entitled 'Supplementary Reports' will be made available, one which excludes students with mild intellectual disabilities (SA5) and another which excludes students with special educational needs (SEN). The Supplementary Reports enable these schools to fully understand their students' standards and hence optimise planning of their teaching programmes.

## ***Experience gained from TSA 2006***

What has been learnt from TSA 2006? The results of TSA 2006 provide data about the performance of a third cohort of Primary 3 students, a second cohort of Primary 6 students and baseline data about a first cohort of Secondary 3 students.

The overall pattern of performance of P.3 students in 2006 was similar to that observed in 2004 and 2005. Hong Kong P.3 students performed best in Mathematics (87%) and at a slightly lower level in Chinese Language (85%). The subject with the lowest proportion of students not meeting the standards was English Language (79%), for which almost one in five students were performing below the minimum standards set for basic competency in this subject. The same pattern was observed in both cases of P.6 and S.3 students who performed best in Mathematics (84% and 78%), followed by Chinese Language (77% and 76%) and then English Language (71% and 69%).

At both the P.3 and P.6 levels, a small increase in the percentage of students achieving basic competency was observed. At the S.3 level, somewhat smaller proportions of students were found to have achieved basic competency than at the P.3 and P.6 levels. As noted earlier, this is a predictable result and reflects the tendency for a growing achievement gap between high and low performing students over successive years of schooling.

It is possible to make a tentative conclusion about changes in performance levels for P.3 students between 2004 and 2006 and for P.6 students between 2005 and 2006 across the three subjects, namely Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics. There was an improvement in the percentage of students achieving basic competency of P.3 in 2006 relative to performance levels in 2004 and 2005 in all three subjects. The same improvement was found in P.6 in 2006 relative to performance levels in 2005. The smallest improvement was observed in Mathematics, the subject with the highest proportions of students achieving basic competency, while the largest improvement was observed in English Language, the subject with the lowest proportions of students meeting the P.3 and P.6 standards. Once again, this is a predictable pattern of results and reflects the fact that significant improvements are more readily achieved when the base of comparison is relatively low.

It nevertheless is encouraging to observe improvements in all three subjects at both the P.3 and P.6 levels in the performance of students in 2006 compared to 2005, and in particular the improvement in performance in English Language. In subsequent years, with more

information on student percentages, it will be possible to get a better idea of trends over time.

For both schools and the system, the most useful information provided by TSA 2006 is the detailed information provided in chapters 6 – 8 of this report on performance with reference to competencies in specific skills or dimensions. These analyses point to areas that are either not being addressed adequately in classes or where better support is needed.

### ***Positive Impact***

Since the introduction of the TSA in 2004, schools have had an indication of the proportion of their students who are performing at or below the minimum level required for completing a key stage. This should not only raise awareness of these students and their needs, but also awareness of the standards themselves.

Schools are more aware of the meaning of basic competency and of the basic competencies included in the curriculum. A greater emphasis on the teaching of language strategies rather than on vocabulary and rote learning is obvious in some anecdotal evidence from teachers. Schools have begun teaching phonics and the skills of reading aloud. This has been reported by teachers and has been borne out by the demonstrated improvements in these areas in Primary 3 and Primary 6 TSA results. Locally published coursebooks and supplementary texts for Hong Kong local schools have started to feature a wider range of skills analogous to those in the TSA and the web-based Student Assessment. Examples include making inferences, predicting and deducing meaning from unfamiliar words. These skills have been included in the curriculum but have been given greater attention since the commencement of the TSA. Schools are also now aware of the importance of oral skills. Some have begun inviting parents (a valuable external resource) to help prepare students for oral discussion in Chinese TSA for Primary 3 and Primary 6. All of these developments represent a positive impact of the TSA.

Since the TSA only aims to provide schools with data to enhance the overall effectiveness of learning and teaching, the assessment results of individual schools are not ranked or made known to the public. Schools can get access to their own information via the internet, using confidentiality protocols to exclude unauthorised access. Schools are in control of essential data which is restricted to the school itself. This practice ensures that trust is established between the schools and Government.

Since 2005, on an on-going basis, training sessions for teachers for each subject have been jointly organised with the officers of Education and Manpower Bureau (with the participation of training officers from the Hong Kong Institute of Education in 2006). The aims of the programme are to enable teachers to gain a broader perspective of assessment for learning and to enable them to understand the key processes involved in making effective use of TSA results to enhance learning and teaching.

### ***The Way Forward***

The TSA is now fully implemented in the manner envisaged by the Education Commission. Over the coming years, further data will be obtained which will enable schools to have reliable estimates of their performance and a clear idea regarding those areas of focus in which they might need to provide additional effort and resources. In addition, the Education and Manpower Bureau will have an initial estimate of the extent to which the curriculum is being taught and areas that need extra attention. Schools will also have an indication of territory-wide trends in performance and of those schools requiring more targeted assistance.