

LCQ17: Physical activities for students

Following is a question by the Hon Ma Fung-kwok and a written reply by the Secretary for Education, Mr Kevin Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (February 26):

Question:

It has been reported that the findings of a survey conducted in the middle of last year by the Hong Kong Elite Athletes Association have shown that school children on average were engaged in physical activities for only some 30 minutes each day at school, which was far less than the level of physical activities of 60 minutes each day as recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO). Furthermore, less than half of the school children surveyed were interested in taking a double-period lesson of physical education (PE). In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it will review and improve the contents (including aspects of the types and forms of activities) of PE lessons in primary and secondary schools, with a view to making PE lessons more enjoyable and thereby increasing the interest of school children in physical activities; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) whether it will consider increasing the number of hours of PE lessons in primary and secondary schools, in order to increase the time spent by school children on physical activities each day; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) of the details and effectiveness of the measures implemented by the Government this year to encourage and support schools and sports organisations to organise extracurricular sports programmes; whether it will consider introducing more of such measures next year to encourage schools and sports organisations to organise more extracurricular sports programmes; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(4) of the number of sports programmes, since the introduction of the Opening up School Facilities for Promotion of Sports Development Scheme in the 2017-2018 school year, organised by sports organisations using the facilities opened up by participating schools, as well as the number of school children participating in those programmes; the measures to be implemented by the Government next year to encourage more schools and sports organisations to participate in the Scheme and organise more extracurricular sports programmes; and

(5) whether the Government will, in the long run, formulate a work plan and set phased targets for increasing the time spent by school children on physical activities each day to 60 minutes as recommended by WHO; if so, of

the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

It is the World Health Organization (WHO)'s recommendation for children and adolescents to have around 60 minutes of physical activities every day. We understand that in accordance with WHO's definition, physical activity covers any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that requires energy expenditure, including playing, engaging in recreational pursuits, exercising, as well as commuting (such as walking and cycling) and carrying out household chores. Therefore, children and adolescents can engage in physical activities through a wide range of activities to develop a habit of regular exercise and build a healthy body.

Our reply to the Hon Ma Fung-kwok's question is as follows:

(1) and (2) It takes the concerted efforts of schools, families and society to enhance students' interest in sports and further encourage them to participate in physical activities. For schools, in addition to Physical Education (PE) lessons, other learning experiences and extra-curricular activities, as well as the support and engagement of various stakeholders are also of great importance. PE is one of the eight Key Learning Areas of our school curriculum. Primary and secondary schools are required to arrange PE lessons for students to develop their physical competence, deepen their knowledge of physical activities and safety, and nurture positive values and attitudes. To increase the level of physical activities of students, schools usually provide opportunities for students to take part in physical activities before and after morning assemblies, during recess or lunch break, and after school. In collaboration with various organisations, schools also engage, with existing resources, professional coaches/instructors of different sports activities to hold interest classes for their students in schools. These classes cover a number of featured sports activities such as rope skipping, floorcurling, and Wushu. Moreover, sports days, swimming galas and school team training, etc. are organised to enhance students' interest in different sports activities. Also, the Education Bureau (EDB) has all along been supporting different organisations to collaborate with schools in helping students develop a habit of having physical exercises and actively participate in physical activities for health promotion. For example, under the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust's "Fun to Move@JC" project and the "Active School Programme", an array of fun physical activities have been held in partnership with various organisations for enhancing the interest of students, parents and teaching staff in engaging in physical activities.

As regards the school PE curriculum, the Curriculum Development Council revised the Physical Education Key Learning Area Curriculum Guide (Primary 1 to Secondary 6) in 2017 and included the relevant recommendation of WHO (i.e. students should accumulate at least 60 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activities daily) as a direction for the development of the PE curriculum. The EDB organises training courses/sharing sessions on

various themes for teachers every year to enhance their understanding of the updated curriculum and relevant teaching strategies, and enable them to keep abreast of the latest development of different sports and new sports (such as tchoukball and freestyle football) so as to introduce various types of activities in PE lessons and make the lessons more enjoyable. There were over 500 participating teachers in each of the past two school years. We have also set up learning communities on various topics and built professional exchange platforms for teachers to explore learning and teaching strategies which are effective and with an element of fun, such as conducting PE lessons in the form of games more often, in order to enhance students' interest in participating in physical activities and increase their motivations for engaging in and time spent on physical activities.

The support and involvement of parents is highly instrumental in fostering students' interest in exercising and promoting their active participation in physical activities after school. Hence, the EDB will strengthen parent education to raise parents' awareness by, among others, making available at the "Smart Parent Net" a video clip that encourages parents to do exercise together with their children. We hope parents and schools will work together to help children develop an active and healthy lifestyle.

Apart from giving time for students to engage in physical activities through PE lessons, it is more important for schools to develop students' interest in sports and help students understand various sports and how to participate in sports activities safely. Students' engagement in physical activities should not confine to PE lessons. Under the prevailing school curriculum framework, which is open and flexible, schools are allowed to make adjustments appropriate to the needs of their students, such as increasing the number of PE lessons, provided that such adjustments do not deviate from the requirements of relevant curriculum guides. Schools should make multifarious efforts to foster students' interest in sports and provide students with opportunities to participate in sports rather than relying solely on PE lessons.

(3) Relevant bureaux, including the EDB and the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB), have been working with various non-governmental organisations such as the Physical Fitness Association of Hong Kong, China, Hong Kong Schools Sports Federation (HKSSF) and Hong Kong Schools Dance Association (HKSDA) to organise a variety of activities/projects to provide students with choices and opportunities to participate in physical activities. The activities/projects organised include the School Physical Fitness Award Scheme, Inter-school Sports Competitions, Schools Dance Festival and Jump Rope for Heart Scheme. Since 2001, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) has implemented the School Sports Programme (SSP) for students of primary and secondary schools. SSP is subvented and co-ordinated by the LCSD with the programmes organised by different National Sports Associations (NSAs). It aims to develop the interests of students in sports, encourage them to participate in sports regularly, raise the standard of sport performance among students and identify potential student athletes for further training. SSP is comprised of seven subsidiary programmes/schemes,

namely Sport Education Programme, Easy Sport Programme, Outreach Coaching Programme, Joint Schools Sports Training Programme, Badges Award Scheme, Sports Award Scheme and Sport Captain Programme. In the 2018/19 school year, about 90 per cent of schools in Hong Kong took part in the Scheme and over 8 500 programmes were organised for about 635 000 students. In addition, since 2016, the HAB has launched the Retired Athletes Transformation Programme to subsidise eligible schools and sports organisations to employ retired athletes for promoting sports in schools, identifying and nurturing potential sports talent. The programme also aims to help the retired athletes develop long-term careers upon retirement from training and competitions. At present, 55 retired athletes are employed by 39 schools and 16 sports organisations under this programme. Concurrently, EDB has been co-operating with and providing funding support for HKSSF and HKSDA to organise large-scale sports and dancing competitions/activities in order to enhance students' interest in taking part in physical activities as well as to develop their potential. HKSSF organised over 20 000 inter-school competitions with about 126 000 participating students in each of the past three years. Dance competitions organised by HKSDA attracted about 22 000 participating students in each of the past three years. In addition, the EDB has provided public sector schools and schools under the Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) with the recurrent Life-wide Learning Grant, with an annual provision of about \$900 million, from the 2019/20 school year for organising more diversified experiential learning activities for students to facilitate learning beyond the classroom. These activities include sports related co-curricular activities organised for enhancing students' exposure to different sports.

(4) The EDB and the HAB jointly implemented the Opening up School Facilities for Promotion of Sports Development Scheme (the Scheme) starting from the 2017/18 school year to encourage schools to open up their facilities, with a view to enhancing the sporting culture in schools. Under the Scheme, sports organisations are encouraged to hold sports activities in schools to provide students with more opportunities to participate in sports and develop a healthy habit of exercising. Since its launch in the 2017/18 school year, the Scheme has recorded a gradual increase in the number of participating schools and sports organisations, sports programmes and participants. Details are set out in the table below:

	2017/18 school year	2018/19 school year	2019/20 school year
No. of schools opening up their facilities to sports organisations	12	27	60
No. of sports organisations hiring schools facilities	15	20	37

No. of sports programmes organised	38	162	276
No. of participants	1 300	3 400	10 300 (Estimated)

To facilitate schools to cultivate a sporting culture and provide more opportunities for students to participate in sports activities, sports organisations hiring school facilities are required to reserve one-fourth of the places in each sports programme for priority enrolment by students, teachers and/or parents of the participating schools who have met the technical requirement(s) of the activity, if any, under the Scheme. Since its launch, the Scheme has been well-received by stakeholders. Taking into account the views collected from participating schools and sports organisations, the EDB and the HAB have reviewed and enhanced the Scheme. The enhancement measures implemented include extending the Scheme from public sector schools to schools under the DSS in the 2018/19 school year; increasing the upper limit of subsidy for each participating school from \$80,000 to \$130,000 a year; and expanding the list of eligible sports organisations. In the 2019/20 school year, we allowed non-profit-making organisations with ability, experience and a track record of organising sports programmes in schools and the community to join the Scheme on a pilot basis. Participating schools are eligible to apply for a grant ranging from \$0.7 million to \$4 million from the Sir David Trench Fund for Recreation for improving or upgrading their sports facilities. The EDB and the HAB will continue to collect views from participating schools and sports organisations for on-going enhancements of the Scheme, with a view to organising more sports programmes by using school facilities.

(5) To strengthen our efforts to combat the threat posed by non-communicable diseases and align with WHO's recommendations, the Government launched the "Towards 2025: Strategy and Action Plan to Prevent and Control Non-Communicable Diseases in Hong Kong" in 2018. The strategy sets out nine local targets to be achieved by 2025, one being a 10 per cent relative reduction in the prevalence of insufficient physical activities among adolescents. Teachers are important stakeholders who play a vital role in motivating students to participate in physical activities. The EDB has established a PE teachers' professional network since the 2017/18 school year. So far, over 120 schools have joined the network. We will continue to actively encourage schools to join the network and provide a series of support measures through the network, including organising workshops and sharing sessions for participating teachers on a regular basis. The network aims at strengthening teachers' understanding of and capacity for designing PE lessons with fun elements; supporting schools to formulate the "Policy for Developing an Active and Healthy School Campus"; promoting doing physical activities during recess and between lessons through sharing of good practices; and encouraging students to increase the time spent on physical activities and do more simplified physical fitness exercises at home with their family members by making good use of the EDB's and other organisations' online learning and teaching resources. The HAB and the LCSD will conduct a Territory-wide

Physical Fitness Survey for the community in 2020. Through fitness tests and questionnaires, we aim at developing a database of fitness level of our residents, which allows for tracking of relevant changes and sporting patterns. The survey will facilitate the setting of long-term goals and policies in the promotion of sports for all, which would in turn allow us to put in place appropriate measures to encourage the public (including students) to participate in sports regularly. We will continue to co-operate with different organisations towards the goal of increasing the time spent by students on daily physical activity, organise more sports-related activities/programmes for students to participate in physical activities every day, and enjoy the fun and benefits of sports.