

LCQ8: Promotion of a reading culture

Following is a question by the Hon Ma Fung-kwok and a written reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Lau Kong-wah, in the Legislative Council today (January 15):

Question:

Since 2018, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) has, in collaboration with the Education Bureau (EDB), implemented the reading-for-all campaign with the theme of "Discover and Share the Joy of Reading". To this end, public libraries have organised various reading promotion activities, and EDB has also provided financial resources to kindergartens, primary and secondary schools for promoting reading. However, a report on the 2019 Survey on Hong Kong People's Reading Habits released by the Hong Kong Publishing Professionals Society in April last year showed that about 30 per cent of the respondents did not have the habit of reading physical books in the year before, and almost 80 per cent of the respondents had not heard of the aforesaid campaign. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the targeted activities organised in the past two years by public libraries under the reading-for-all campaign to encourage various groups (especially students and young people) to develop a reading habit; the responses to and effectiveness of such activities;
- (2) of the details of the work of LCSD in the past two years (i) in collaboration with EDB, on promoting students to develop a reading habit and (ii) in collaboration with community organisations or individuals, on promoting reading among all people (e.g. the participating members or organisations of the publishing sector and the participating authors);
- (3) of the measures taken in the past two years and to be taken this year by the Government to publicise and promote the reading-for-all campaign;
- (4) given that starting from the 2019-2020 school year, the Government provides, depending on the number of students, a recurrent Promotion of Reading Grant ranging from \$10,000 to \$20,000 to each kindergarten participating in the Kindergarten Education Scheme, whether it has assessed the effectiveness of such initiative; whether it will consider raising the level of the grant or introducing more measures to enhance the promotion of a reading culture at the kindergarten level;
- (5) given that starting from the 2018-2019 school year, the Government has provided, depending on the number of classes operated, a recurrent Promotion of Reading Grant ranging from \$30,000 to \$70,000 to each public sector primary and secondary school, whether it has assessed the effectiveness of such initiative; whether it will consider increasing the level of the grant or introducing more measures to enhance the promotion of a reading culture at the primary and secondary school level; and

(6) whether the Government will introduce new measures this year to promote reading, such as offering book coupons to primary and secondary school students to subsidise their purchase of extracurricular books; if so, of the details?

Reply:

President,

Cultivating a reading habit among the public is conducive to promoting culture and enhancing humanistic qualities. Since April 2018, the Government has been organising a series of activities under the theme of "Discover and Share the Joy of Reading" to promote reading culture to all, including students and young people.

The consolidated reply to various parts of the Hon Ma's question is as follows:

(1) to (3) In the past two years, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD), in collaboration with different community sectors through the network of the Hong Kong Public Libraries (HKPL), organised more than 23 000 extension activities each year at the territory-wide and district levels. Major activities are outlined below:

- large-scale campaigns were held, including the "4.23 World Book Day Creative Competition", library fun days and the first "Hong Kong Library Festival" (the Festival). More than 250 activities in collaboration with the library, education and publishing sectors as well as other partners were organised during the Festival;
- at the district level, more than 3 000 reading activities were held annually in various public libraries of the 18 districts. In addition to the "Summer Reading Fiesta" held during the summer vacation, HKPL also organised parent-child reading programmes with local features jointly with various district councils and district organisations;
- in addition to printed books, HKPL also actively promoted e-reading through participation in the Hong Kong Book Fair and the Learning and Teaching Expo with a view to promoting library e-resources among members of the public and teachers. In early 2019, an e-book promotion campaign "Take a Break—eReading Corner" was organised in 10 shopping malls, attracting over 73 000 downloads during the promotion period;
- moreover, the LCSD arranged promotion and publicity in various means, including the "Reading KOL" Short Video Competition and the "Reading is Joyful" Facebook/Instagram page, and produced the Announcement in the

Public Interest "Discover and Share the Joy of Reading" for television and radio broadcast to promote reading culture. Activities such as the "Fun Reading at Hong Kong Public Transportation", the "Pop-up Library" and the "Story Ambassador Programme" were also organised to bring alternative reading experience to the public; and

- in collaboration with the Hong Kong Publishing Professionals Society Ltd., HKPL produced short videos on award-winning works of the "Hong Kong Publishing Biennial Award 2019" and the "Hong Kong Biennial Awards for Chinese Literature" to introduce quality publications to the Hong Kong community for promoting quality reading.

HKPL is committed to enhancing co-operation with the Education Bureau (EDB) to promote reading among students. In strengthening outreach services, the Thematic Block Loan to Kindergartens was launched in early 2019 and used by more than 160 kindergartens by the end of the year. HKPL has also enriched its collection with reference to EDB's recommended booklists on reading themes. In addition, EDB and LCSD's branch libraries conducted parent-child reading workshops, and invited principals, teachers and parents of kindergartens to participate. EDB also organised a volunteer group under the Native-speaking English Teacher Scheme to conduct English storytelling sessions for children (including ethnic minorities) in different public libraries to promote parent-child reading.

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In parallel, EDB has collaborated with the publishing sector and professional organisations to organise large-scale reading promotion activities such as the "Joyful Reading Carnival" in 2019 with LCSD's support to encourage parent-child reading and create a reading atmosphere through different reading-related activities. A representative of EDB has also been appointed as a member of the Public Libraries Advisory Committee to advise on encouraging community support and working in partnership with different sectors in promoting reading, lifelong learning and literary arts.

LCSD and EDB will continue to roll out different measures to promote reading in the coming years. LCSD has planned to launch the following new improvement measures:

- to launch the "Reading is Joyful" website in 2020 to further enhance publicity at online and social media platforms;
- to implement the three-year "Pilot Programme for Promotion of Local Publications and Reading Culture" starting from the second quarter of 2020, enabling the relevant sector to develop a new electronic database of local publications to facilitate readers' access to enriched information of local publications through the online catalogue of HKPL, and inviting local writers to attend large-scale promotion activities at various public libraries to promote reading;

- to launch the "Joyful Reading at Your Neighbourhood: Library-on-Wheels" Pilot Project in January 2020 under which a specially designed truck will visit different communities and dovetail with community events to promote thematic reading, self-lending services, e-books as well as other e-resources and online services among members of the public, together with organising activities such as book exhibitions and storytelling sessions by story ambassadors; and
- to refurbish existing public libraries for enhancing the design and layout of the environment of children's libraries so as to attract children and their parents to use library services.

(4) to (6) As regards the promotion of reading grant at school level, the Promotion of Reading Grant for Kindergartens has just been implemented for a few months in the 2019/20 school year. While concrete figures are not available at this stage, the relevant sector in general finds the grant helpful in promoting reading. To ensure proper and effective use of the grant, kindergartens are required to devise a school plan on the use of the grant for endorsement by their School Management Committees (SMCs), and publish at year end details of activities held and the financial report in the School Report of the school year to review effectiveness of the plan and make timely adjustments to the objectives and strategies. To enhance transparency, kindergartens are encouraged to upload the School Report endorsed by SMCs onto their homepages. EDB will also gain understanding on promotion of reading by kindergartens through different channels such as school visits and regular contacts, and make suggestions when necessary. The grant rates are subject to annual adjustment in accordance with the movement of the Composite Consumer Price Index.

At the primary and secondary levels, starting from the 2018/19 school year, EDB has disbursed a recurrent "Promotion of Reading Grant" to all public sector schools for strengthening the promotion of reading. Under the principle of school-based management, schools should set appropriate goals and formulate strategies based on their actual contexts to make good use of the grant to cultivate students' reading interest and habit. Based on the information collected by EDB from school visits, focus group interviews and regular contacts, primary and secondary schools in general agree that the grant has a positive impact on the promotion of reading as it helps enrich library collection, widen students' scope of reading and provide schools with appropriate resources to organise activities that enhance students' interest in reading.

Regarding measures for enhancing support to schools, EDB will continue to provide them with recommended booklists on different reading themes such as STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) education, healthy living, Chinese history, Chinese culture and moral education. Schools can encourage students to actively borrow books on related reading themes and organise different types of reading activities such as talks by authors,

parent-child reading activities, storytelling competitions, play-acting, online book sharing and post-reading creations. EDB will continue to develop reading-related learning and teaching resource packages for teachers to facilitate reading promotion in schools.

EDB has no plan to provide subsidies for primary and secondary students to purchase extracurricular books at this stage.