

SED on class resumption and cross-boundary students

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Education, Mr Kevin Yeung, at a media session at the Central Government Offices today (February 13):

Reporter: Would like to ask about the cross-boundary students since last time you have said that approaching March, you will have more concrete measures in terms of cross-boundary students. Do you have any more concrete measures by now since the suspension period has been extended to March 16? For example, would cross-boundary students be staying in the Mainland for a longer period compared to local students even schools resume. Or even some suggested that an exemption for cross-boundary students to come back to Hong Kong to go to schools, could it be possible or the bureau has any thoughts on that? And secondly, this time the suspension is for two weeks, what is the basis of the considerations of the bureau, like why not longer for example four weeks since we have already endured a two-week extension? And lastly, it's about DSE, last time you mentioned that the decision would be made in late February, since many students voiced over to the bureau to an early announcement and since classes have been suspended for another two weeks. Is it that the bureau implies to follow plan B? Is it to postpone the examination and is it still going to be announced in late February? Thank you.

Secretary for Education: For the HKDSE (Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination), we are still doing an assessment basically we have to consider the development of the epidemic and also all the preparatory work of the HKEAA (Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority) in conducting the examination. So we will still maintain that we will make the final decision by the end of this month to decide whether we will choose option A or option B.

For cross-boundary students, of course they are also Hong Kong students so we have to consider their interests as well, but when we decide whether we will resume classes we will have to make sure that it's safe for all students to do so, as well as the impact of having the cross-boundary students coming over to Hong Kong to attend classes. It will also depend on the situation at that time of the epidemic both in Hong Kong and Shenzhen. Now we have to consider different options including whether they would come at the same time and whether they would have further extension of their stay in Shenzhen before they come back. But it all depends on when we could resume classes, so we are still considering different options and have not made any final decision yet.

Regarding the period of extension, we have to balance the interests of the students as well as the needs of society. We all know that, in view of the epidemic, it's not really safe now to resume classes and that's why we

suspended classes. And deciding on the period of the extension for suspension, we have to balance the needs of the students that we all want the students to resume classes as soon as possible, and at the same time we also need to balance the needs of the parents that schools are to give them sufficient planning for future activities. If we were asked today, today is February 13, we are announcing that classes will not resume before March 16, that's in fact over a month of a suspension period which I think it's quite a reasonable amount of time for the time being.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)