

SED's opening remarks at media session (with video)

Following is the transcript of opening remarks by the Secretary for Education, Mr Kevin Yeung, at a media session at the Central Government Offices today (July 20):

Due to COVID-19, all secondary schools, primary schools and special schools as well as kindergartens have advanced the commencement of the summer holiday to July 13. I am thankful to schools and parents for their understanding and support.

As in the past, some international schools and kindergartens will start their new school years in the first half of August. However, in view of the recent spate of COVID-19 cases and there is no sign of improvement at the moment, it is rather impossible for these schools to commence the new school year as scheduled.

For better preparation of schools and parents, I now take this opportunity to talk about the EDB (Education Bureau)'s working directions concerning the arrangement for the commencement of the new school year to protect the health of teaching staff and students.

We anticipate at this stage that classes of all schools, including international schools and kindergartens, which used to start their new school year early, would not commence earlier than August 17. The final commencement date will depend on the development of the epidemic. We will notify the schools as soon as a final decision is made and will allow at least two weeks for their preparation.

We have gained some practical experience from the class resumption arrangement from May to June this year, such as resumption by phases and levels, half-day schooling, as well as the various crowd control and health protection measures. We will continue to consider the commencement of the new school year along these directions.

Since June, we have arranged a group of Secondary Three to Five students, who are cross-boundary students (CBS) at the same time, to attend school under some special arrangements. The special arrangements for CBS demand considerable time, resources and preparation work on the part of schools, parents as well as students themselves. The arrangements involve a number of issues, including the anti-epidemic policies of Hong Kong and Shenzhen, cross-boundary immigration control as well as transportation arrangements. We also have to take the health and safety of teachers and students as well as the general public of both places as the prime consideration, and consider the capacities of various parties. Unless public transportation and more boundary control points can resume service in the immediate future, we can only consider continuing the arrangement for the

same group of students, i.e. Secondary Four to Secondary Six students, to come to Hong Kong, subject to further discussion with the Mainland authorities. Special arrangements are unlikely to be made for Secondary Three students or younger to come to Hong Kong at the beginning of the new school year. We will work with schools to arrange home learning for these students, and provide the necessary support.

The Education Bureau will pay close attention to the development of the epidemic. We will also consult health experts and liaise with the school sector in determining the arrangements for the commencement of the new school year.

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