

Community Care Fund to launch assistance programmes for needy students

The following is issued on behalf of the Community Care Fund Secretariat:

The Education Bureau (EDB) held a briefing session today (June 9) for primary and secondary school principals and teachers on the implementation details of two assistance programmes under the Community Care Fund (CCF) on providing subsidy to meet lunch expenses at school and the setting up of a school-based fund to subsidise students in joining learning activities outside Hong Kong.

The two assistance programmes were endorsed by the Steering Committee on the Community Care Fund after careful consideration, having regard to the views from various sectors. The programmes could offer additional support to needy families on top of the existing assistance provided by the Government to students from low-income families.

Starting from the new academic year commencing in September this year, the CCF will provide needy full-time Primary 1 to 6 students of Government, Aided and Direct Subsidy Scheme schools, who are receiving full level of assistance from the Student Financial Assistance Agency (SFAA), with a subsidy to meet lunch expenses at school for one academic year.

The subsidy can help needy students attain a more adequate diet, and allow their families to redeploy resources for other purposes so as to alleviate their financial burden. The programme is estimated to benefit about 51,000 students.

The other assistance programme of launching the school-based fund aims to subsidise students from low-income families to participate in learning activities outside Hong Kong which are organised or recognised by schools. It will enable students to enhance their knowledge and skills, as well as broaden their horizons and learning experiences.

The programme will last for three years from July 2011 to June 2014. Needy primary and secondary school students studying in Government, Aided, Caput and Direct Subsidy Scheme schools will be eligible for assistance (those who are receiving full or half level of means-tested financial assistance from the SFAA, Comprehensive Social Security Assistance, or those who can meet the criteria of financial difficulties as defined by individual schools).

The EDB will earmark funding for schools based on their number of eligible students. Schools can deploy funds in a flexible manner and decide on the activities, students and their number to be subsidised, as well as the amount of subsidy received by each student in accordance with open, fair and reasonable principles.

The activities subsidised by the school-based fund should comprise learning elements. Schools should set the theme, content and objectives of the learning activities, and plan the itineraries accordingly. Upon completion of the activities, schools should require participants to review their learning experience.

The EDB will issue a circular to schools in late June 2011 to elaborate on the details of the two assistance programmes. For the school-based fund, schools may apply for funding to subsidise learning activities to be held in July this year the earliest, while the programme on lunch subsidy will be rolled out in the coming academic year.

The Steering Committee on the Community Care Fund announced earlier that 10 assistance programmes would be launched in 2011-12, and funds had also been set aside for three other programmes of which implementation details are being formulated. The other assistance programmes will be rolled out by phases, benefiting various groups including the elderly, handicapped, children, new arrivals, patients and ethnic minorities.

Ends/Thursday, June 9, 2011

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