

ANNOUNCEMENT ON THE DEFERMENT OF DIRECT SUBSIDY SCHEME

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Dear Alumni of the Wah Yans,

The members of the Jesuit Board of Education met on 12th November 2007 at Wah Yan College, Hong Kong to consider all the different aspects of DSS (Direct Subsidy Scheme). These were considered in the light of our Jesuit vision, mission and spirituality, and in the light of the latest education policy of the Education Bureau as well as the actual situation in our schools.

Like our Alumni, what we wish to achieve is that the Wah Yans continue to grow, develop and improve in two areas in particular:

- the first is in the area of continuing in the spirit of our Catholic and Jesuit heritage, the moral and character development of our students, preparing them for leadership in our society
- the second is in the area of excellence, both academic and others, helping the students to develop their gifts and potential to their maximum achievement.

We have plans for the future development in these two important areas. These plans can be achievable with the resources provided by the support of the many alumni and generous donors to the Wah Yan One Family Foundation. So we wish to defer the DSS option for future consideration, if conditions warrant this change.

We wish to share with you the fact that while we examined the different factors speaking for D.S.S. for our schools, we found the following factors more influential in the formation of our opinion:

1. We consider that the government education policy is at present very changeable, uncertain and unclear. We should not make a decision in such a situation.
2. We have honestly considered DSS as a strategy of change and improvement in the schools helping us to provide a better education and a better formation of character in line with our Catholic and Jesuit spirit and values. We have considered the advantage in student selection that DSS can provide for us. We have also considered the advantage in acquiring more competent teachers in the long run and the EMI (English as medium of instruction) issue with DSS in place. It has come to our awareness that the language medium cannot be guaranteed even if we adopt DSS. We realize that DSS is only one possible way to achieve our goals and that it does not necessarily solve all the problems.
3. We realize that introducing DSS would mean strong leadership and an extra team of administrators with a good spirit of cooperation and unity among the administrators and teachers. We consider that Wah Yan Hong Kong is not ready for this transition. Since Wah Yan Kowloon will have a new Principal from the next academic year, it will not be the best time for the new management to take on DSS.
4. We feel that a very mistaken impression has been circulating that the Wah Yans academic results have been going down which has worried the Past Students. However, looking at the charts of the results over the years, they show that the Wah Yans have in

fact been improving in the past few years after the dips. Putting the less truthful media coverage aside, our results are actually comparable with the overall results of the other so-called elite schools in the territory.

Of course these can be even better and we will continue to strive for excellence. What might be more helpful at the moment is that we can have a P.R. person to share the truth with all our Alumni instead of hearing rumours.

5. To do better we need to help our teachers who have so much pressure under the present situation. We can and should improve their plight by employing extra good teachers to help with small class teaching in English, Chinese and Mathematics. This should raise the standard of the students in language learning and learning in the other subjects. We realize that language proficiency and mathematical competency are basic for effective learning.
6. This is only one of the planned improvements we will introduce in the schools. Besides employing extra teachers we will try to improve the skills and the qualifications of the members of the teaching staff by encouraging them to take sabbaticals courses in Hong Kong or abroad especially in language skills and creativity by providing scholarships or financial support. Teachers will be given the opportunity to study the Characteristics of Jesuit Education and Ignatian Pedagogy and to see those in practice in our Jesuit schools abroad by exchange programmes. Teachers will also be encouraged to study spirituality, youth formation and psychology, new education theories, practices and management skills.
It comes to our awareness that even though teachers of DSS schools are teachers of high standard, their sense of loyalty to their schools is not strong. Many of them plan to stay for a few years and then move on. Is this what we want in our Wah Yans? This might be desirable in the business world, but we as educators must ask if this is desirable in primary and secondary education.
7. Students will be given more exposure to using English or using Putonghua by having summer courses in England, U.S. and China.
With the help of extra teachers and coaches, especially native English teachers there will be debates, plays or dramas, poetry, recitation of prose and preparation for the Schools' Speech Festival as well as summer camps. We want our students to become truly educated not just competitive
8. For students taking public examinations the schools will organize qualified tutors to take tutorials on Saturday mornings.
9. The school management committees will have more members with educational background and experience and the schools administration will become more team oriented with a greater sharing of responsibility among the teachers holding responsibility. We are looking and preparing for administrators who have personal knowledge of Jesuit Education and are competent in educational management.
10. As we understand DSS at present, we feel that it would change the Christian spirit and culture of the Wah Yans – a spirit and culture built up over the years by the Fathers and Teachers which is treasured by every past student and former staff member. The tendency will be for it to change to be strongly competitive with a strong emphasis on money and competition rather than on whole person and values education. Our values and education will become more parent-driven than vision-driven with DSS. Most of our parents and

donors are neither Catholic nor Christian which makes it more unlikely that they will share our vision. The situation might be different if, in the future, we could attract a majority of parents who share our vision on education.

11. Considering our relationship with PUWY Primary School, we will continue to monitor their performance, especially their effects on WYHK's EMI status. We will seriously consider different options, including de-linking, should its relationship with us threaten our desired status. We are encouraged by some positive measures that it has taken in the last couple of years to strengthen its academic standard. The EMI status of WYHK is not seriously threatened by the Primary School as a result. However, we acknowledge that a decision regarding our relationship will have to be reached by 2012, if not earlier. Wah Yan Kowloon has no problem staying EMI under the present system.

Having considered all these and decided to proceed with our plans to improve the schools without turning DSS, we pray that our alumni and generous benefactors will share our conviction and vision for the future of the Wah Yans and continue to support us, trusting that we have their best interests at heart.

With sincerest gratitude and very best wishes,

Alfred J. Deignan S.J.