



THE ENGLISH SCHOOLS FOUNDATION
REPORT TO THE BOARD
FOR THE MEETING ON 27 SEPTEMBER 2011
CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The new school year has started very smoothly with new students and teachers settling into schools very quickly. Section 2 of this report sets out the very healthy position on student enrolment. All of the schools were heartened by the excellent IB, Advanced Diploma and GCSE and iGCSE results, which received high profile publicity in the local press. On a more sombre note we were saddened in the first weeks of the term by the death of a teacher and a teacher's husband and by a fatal accident to the father of two ESF students.

2. Subvention

- 2.1 The Chairman, Carlson Tong, and I attended the Legco Education Panel meeting on 11 July 2011. Several Legco members expressed surprise that the continuation of ESF's subvention should be under discussion, but there were calls from some for more transparency and accountability. However, no member spoke against the continuation of the subvention. The Education Bureau (EDB) officials present, Kenneth Chen, Under-Secretary, and Mable Chan, Deputy Secretary, were supportive but emphasised that it was necessary to explore the possibility of an eventual move to self-financing status for ESF.
- 2.2 Following our lobbying meeting with Legco members prior to the Panel, (and we are grateful to Board members who assisted in this exercise), five members of Legco accepted invitations to visit ESF schools. Emily Lau went to Quarry Bay on 2 September; Starry Lee and Tam Yiu Chung to South Island School on 12 September; and Audrey Eu and Tanya Chan to Bradbury on 16 September. The Chairman and/or I accompanied each visit and members had the opportunity to meet the Principal, students and staff. The visits were welcomed by both sides.

3. ESF Elections

- 3.1 The election process for the various positions on the Board, School Councils and advisory committees was launched on 1 September 2011. Elections for School Councils and vacancies on the advisory committees are organised at school level but following guidelines and templates for letters and forms supplied by ESF Centre.
- 3.2 The most high-profile election is that for parent members of the Board. The closing date for nominations is Monday, 19 September (5 pm) and by noon on that day, when this report was completed, 9 candidates had been nominated. The only existing parent member to stand again is Mark Clifford.

- 3.3 Ballot papers will be sent to parents by post on 23 September. The closing date is 12 October (5 pm) and the count will be held at Quarry Bay School on 13 October. Candidates and existing Board members are welcome to attend but are warned that it is likely to be a lengthy process. We are supplying all schools with a drop box for the receipt of ballot papers this year and we hope that that will increase the number of parents voting; it will also, of course, make the count longer. (Arrangements for the elections of parent members of the Board were subsequently changed as follows : deadline for receipt of ballot papers 5 pm, Tuesday, 25 October; counting on 26 October at ESF Centre.)

4. Student Enrolment

- 4.1 Enrolments in ESF schools on 16 September were healthy with Primary Schools at 99.8% and Secondary Schools at 99.6% against overall targeted capacity. The target number of places at Secondary Schools has increased by 15 since September 2010.
- 4.2 Discovery College enrolments were at 95.1% against overall targeted capacity, with the primary school essentially full and the secondary school enrolments having increased since last September from 366 to 445 students as the College has grown to include Year 11. Renaissance College enrolments are 99% against targeted capacity, and enrolment numbers have increased from 1872 to 1967 since this time last year.
- 4.3 JCSRS has 63 students enrolled, three over target.
- 4.4 ESF International Kindergartens enrolments were at 101.6% against overall targeted capacity. In the last year, kindergarten enrolments have increased from 1130 to 1181.
- 4.5 The vacancies that currently exist are largely due to late or un-flagged withdrawals. Schools continue to work from their waiting lists organising and conducting interviews where necessary. Discovery College has secondary places available in all year groups, as does Renaissance College in Years 2, 10, 11. Island School has a small number of lower secondary places available. South Island School and Island School have some Year 12 vacancies.
- 4.6 As of 15 September, 2010, 17042 students were enrolled in the Foundation's twenty-one schools and kindergartens, up from 16,870 in September 2010.
- 4.7 Applications were accepted for the Corporate Surety Scheme from 3 January until 30 June 2011. 292 applications were submitted, a 12% increase since last year. Through the scheme, 208 applicants were offered the opportunity of a place in an ESF primary or secondary school, subject to success at interview, with 173 proceeding to interview. The number of students eventually placed was 152 and the income received from the scheme was HK\$4 million.
- 4.8 Applications for admission in August 2012 are now being received for Year 1 (children born in 2007) and Year 7 (children born in 2001). The central application period for these two year groups runs from 1st to 30th September, 2011. By 12 September, in comparison with the same date last year, there had been a very slight decrease in the number of Year 7 applications received and a 14% overall increase in the number of Year 1 applications for ESF primary schools, an increase of 5% recorded at Discovery College and an increase of 25% at Renaissance College. These increases may be simply a result of parents submitting their applications earlier. We shall have to wait till the closing date before we have an accurate picture of the numbers.

5. Education

5.1 Continuous Professional Development Day, 30 September 2011

For the Foundation-wide continuous professional learning (CPD) day on 30 September, Primary schools have chosen the theme 'Creative Connections', emphasising the place of the Arts in the curriculum. ESF staff will be actively involved in the process of inquiry through the Arts. Session leaders include ESF as well as external providers. For the first time we have colleagues from the Hong Kong Gifted Academy presenting on the day.

There will be school displays where each school will be sharing examples of good practice. These will include resources, unit planners, books, students' work, photographs or a display about a school-based Arts event.

An addition to this year's event is the use of Twitter. Staff can comment, share, collaborate or network by following ESF 'Creative Connections' tweets at [twitter.com/search #ESFCPD](https://twitter.com/search/#ESFCPD)

5.2 School Development Adviser, Primary

The end of October will see Debbie Graham resign her post as School Development Adviser, Primary in order to return to Australia. Debbie leaves after four years of outstanding service during which time she has provided invaluable support to Principals, school leaders and communities and to the Education advisory team. Debbie takes with her our thanks and best wishes.

The recruitment process to fill Debbie's position has been completed and David Fitzgerald was the successful candidate. David is currently Principal of Clearwater Bay School and comes to the position as an experienced Principal and with a strong knowledge of and commitment to ESF. Debbie and David are working together to ensure a smooth transition.

5.3 Secondary Curriculum Group Development Day – 30 September 2011

The curriculum development groups across the secondary schools have two days per year for development. September 30th is promising to be as inspirational as our previous days with a wide range of opportunities. Some of the topics will be:

- "Best practice in the Classroom – Sharing of good Practice"
- Opportunities at the higher education level in a specific area
- Teaching literature in a foreign language
- Developing resources for new specifications
- Hands on cinematography training
- The Pedagogy of active learning
- Choral pedagogy
- Software training at a range of levels
- Current UK work into Scientific literacy
- The use of Sony electronic devices to promote motivation in Science Education
- Adaptive PE
- Introduction to the ESF Therapy Centre.

Professor Bei Dao, a well-known Chinese poet will discuss his poetry with a range of literature teachers and Ed Walsh, a key speaker on science teaching from the UK will talk about promoting scientific literacy. A number of professors from Hong Kong universities will share their expertise in Maths, Science and Languages. Our reach into the academic community is growing as we deepen relationships with local universities.

Relationships with local NGOs have resulted in an excellent set of presentations by Ocean Park, Vernier, The HK Observatory, Eco fieldtrips (an organisation running Biology Fieldtrips), Project Kaisei and the HK Amphibian and Reptile Association.

The range is rich and varied and the aim of the day is to enhance our awareness, skills and knowledge of pedagogy and developments in our fields of study with the direct aim of having an impact on student learning.

5.4 Collaborative Project with Scottish Opera

During the week of 17-23 September, members of Scottish Opera will be visiting Hong Kong to work with the Music Department of the ESF Secondary Schools on a collaborative project based on the opera Carmen, translated to a Chinese setting. The visit will provide opportunities for students to develop their confidence and skills in all aspects of operatic theatre from singing to stage design and playing musical instruments to lighting. Two performances will be held on 23 September 2011 at the Academy of Performing Arts.

6. **Finance**

6.1 Annual Fixed Assets Count

School visits were made to all ESF/ESL schools including the kindergartens to ensure fixed assets counts are completed before year end. It was clearly communicated to the Principals and School Finance Managers that the physical count and reconciliation of schools' fixed assets to the Asset Management module in Epicor must be completed before this year end. During the visits, it was noted that all schools have taken action on the physical count and the majority schools have already completed a significant portion of the exercise. Some schools have requested an extension as major renovation was in progress during the summer. At the same time, ESFC has completed the fixed asset count at the Centre.

6.2 Cheque Payments

We are exploring different options to limit the use of cheques for payment due to the cost of processing cheques. Various banks have presented possible solutions to the Finance team and we are evaluating each option.

6.3 Mandatory Direct Debit

As of 14 Sep 2011, 88% of our students have completed the set-up of Direct Debit instructions for settlement of school fees. The team will continue to follow up with the remaining students.

6.4 RCL payment result

\$60m of Refundable Capital Levy was collected for 2011-12, 100% of the target sum.

6.5 Discovery College Nomination Rights

The \$400,000 nomination rights have been made available from 1 to 30 September 2011 for students seeking entry to Year 1, Year 2, and Year 7 in 2012-13. Nomination rights have also been offered to applicants for other year groups beginning 1 September. The College hopes that the proceeds from the nomination rights will help reduce the annual non-refundable building fund (NBF) of \$9,500 otherwise charged to each student starting 2012-13, but we shall need a clear picture of the final position before making any decisions. Part of the proceeds from nomination rights and the NBF will be used by the school to

purchase capital assets paid for by ESF currently, with the remainder being added to the annual DOA expense.

6.6 Renaissance College's Non-Refundable Building Fund for New Students

Parents applying for Y1 places in 2012-13 have been informed of the one-off, non-refundable contribution to the building fund (NBF) of \$23,500. New students entering Year 2 to Year 12 in 2012-13 will be required to pay a prorated contribution. The majority of the proceeds from the NBF will be used by the school to purchase capital assets otherwise paid for by ESF currently, with the remainder being added to the annual DOA expense. We are awaiting EDB's approval of the NBF.

6.7 Kindergarten Fee Increase

In April 2011 we applied to the EDB for a 5% fee increase across our four kindergartens, bringing the fees up from \$51,000 to \$53,600 per annum for Tsing Yi and Abacus, and from \$53,600 to \$56,300 for Wu Kai Sha and Hillside. Only Wu Kai Sha's new fee has been approved. Tsing Yi's application is pending further processing of documents by EDB, while Abacus' and Hillside's applications have been rejected.

We have written to EDB to appeal their decisions on Abacus and Hillside and are waiting for their formal reply.

6.8 EDB Funding for Learning Support Classes

We continued to press EDB over the summer for financial support for the two new Learning Support Classes at Glenealy and Sha Tin College. A small grant of just under HK\$1 million was received in September and we expect a further HK\$0.3 million in April.

6.9 Donation to the Education of Steven Sidley's Children

Arrangements have been made with the family for the handling of this fund.

6.10 Procurement

All bulk contracts including PCs, laptops, monitors, LCD projectors, and printers for the school year 2011/12 have been completed during the summer break with an estimated savings of 20% compared with retail market price.

Apart from the bulk contracts for schools, the following stand-alone tenders for schools and business units were completed with satisfactory results.

- General insurance programme for the school year 2011/12 - total premium is 5% lower than last year
- Design and production of ESF Annual Report for ESF - the first tendering exercise for this project and the tendered price is about 32% lower than last year's pricing.
- 3-year IT support services contract for ESL
- 3-year security service contract for Island School
- 3-year medical insurance brokerage service contract

7. Internal Audit

- 7.1 In line with audit best practice, all areas of ESF were assessed based on risk and a programme has been established that allows more risky areas to be audited more often. There is still the expectation that all schools will be audited at least once during each three year period, with some schools audited on a more regular basis.

- 7.2 The list of internal audits scheduled for 2011-12 has been finalised and schools and Council Chairmen have been informed. In addition to school audits, there has been an increase in the number of audits scheduled for ESFC in 2011-12. Again areas were selected based on risk.

8. Human Resources

- 8.1 In August, ESF welcomed 134 new teachers to ESF and forty-six existing ESF teachers into new or promoted roles. Of the new teachers, thirty were already based in Hong Kong and 104 new teachers came from a wide variety of countries including UK, UAE, USA, China, Canada, Australia, Germany, Vietnam and New Zealand. New teachers participated in a one day induction at ESF Centre where, in addition to hearing about ESF, they were equipped with information on how to quickly establish themselves in Hong Kong including learning introductory Cantonese words. The induction was followed a few days later with ESF's Amazing Race style "Treasure Hunt" sending new teachers around Hong Kong Island and Kowloon. Participants familiarised themselves with using Hong Kong transportation, seeing both popular and treasured aspects of Hong Kong. In partnership with the Education Team, the induction program continues with follow-up sessions in late October and November to ensure teachers have the best possible start at ESF.
- 8.2 The policies permitting staff members to work beyond the age of retirement of sixty years old were recently updated. The Staffing Operations Committee now approves direct reports of the Chief Executive, primarily covering SMT members and principals. Principals in conjunction with their School Councils will approve school staff members. Staff members will not be permitted to work beyond the age of seventy.

9. Communications

- 9.1 There was a great deal of press coverage of the IB Diploma results and the Legco Education Panel meeting of 11 July 2011 during the early part of the summer. This was followed by extensive correspondence in the South China Morning Post with letters supporting or opposing the subvention. Our estimates is that about two-thirds of the letters were in favour. There has also been good coverage of ESF in the Chinese press, including quite long pieces on students successful results in the iGCSE/GCSE examinations.
- 9.2 The Board's Communications Working Group met on 31 August and a copy of notes of the meeting is attached to the agenda.

10. Facilities Development

10.1 Summer Works

It was another successful summer for the Facilities team. Working closely with schools, the planning process culminated in repairs, maintenance and improvements being completed at all schools. A sample of the works is listed below:

- Air conditioning replacement: Kennedy School, Peak School, Beacon Hill School
- Classroom renovations: Peak School
- Toilet Refurbishment: KGV, KCSRS and Bradbury School

10.2 Extension Projects

The extension projects at Sha Tin Junior School and Sha Tin College commenced as planned. These projects will provide much needed space at both campuses, driven by the strategic goal to have Learning Support Centres at all ESF schools.

10.3 Major Projects

Preparation works are well underway at KGV, with demolition completed and substructure works in progress. Regular liaison with the school, on matters of coordination and noise mitigation, is underway and has matured well.

The contractor for the main contract works at KJS is now being appointed after a lengthy and detailed tender process. The demolition of the old Perth Street campus is complete (as part of advanced works), and the main contractor will take possession of the site at the end of September 2011.

11. **ESF Educational Services Limited**

- 11.1 Having been granted candidacy status by the IBO for the Primary Years Programme (PYP), teachers and EAs from all four ESL kindergartens participated in a PYP focused Professional Development Day facilitated by Rebecca Clements, ESF's Adviser – Learning and Teaching, supported by Traci Salter, Clearwater Bay School's PYP Coordinator. Further in-school training will be delivered by IBO appointed consultants later this term.
- 11.2 Record numbers of students attended ESL's Language Summer Schools. Nearly 2,000 students, from kindergarten through primary and to secondary, participated in week-long camps during the summer holidays, hosted at a number of ESL schools. A new drama-based course proved to be a popular new initiative.
- 11.3 ESL's multi-sports camps and sports-specific clinics were also offered at a couple of schools, although the summer works programme and school renovation projects restricted access to the KGV field and to the Shatin schools sports complex.
- 11.4 Results from the students taking ESL's IB Finals revision courses during the Easter holidays were extremely encouraging and feedback on the support provided by the courses and the course teachers was very positive. "The revision was very useful and definitely helped pushed my grade up." "The revision course helped me a lot!" "Not the best results, but much more than I was hoping for! It has allowed me to get my desired university options. Thank you for all your help."

Heather Du Quesnay
19 September 2011