

Family Council
Final Report of
the Committee on Prevention of Student Suicides

INTRODUCTION

This paper provides background information to facilitate Members' discussion of the presentation to be made by Professor Paul YIP, Chairman, Committee on Prevention of Student Suicides (Committee) on the key findings and recommendations in the Committee's Final Report (final report). A copy of the PowerPoint presentation is at **Annex A**.

BACKGROUND

2. In response to the spate of student suicides in the 2015/16 school year, the Education Bureau set up the Committee on 30 March 2016 to (a) examine the possible causes of recent student suicides in Hong Kong; (b) advise on the areas of existing services related to suicide prevention that could be strengthened; and (c) proposed measures to prevent student suicides.

3. The Committee comprises 21 members from different sectors of the community including public health experts, psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, teachers, school principals, parents, youth and government officials. Five Working Groups on Mental Health, Schools, Families, Media and Youth/Post-secondary Institutions have been set up, with the aim to providing more in-depth discussion in each of the areas.

4. On 23 August 2016, the Family Focus Group joined the Sub-committee on the Promotion of Family Core Values and Family Education meeting and presented its preliminary findings. Extract of the minutes of the meeting is at **Annex B**.

THE FINAL REPORT

5. Having examined 71 suicides cases of local primary, secondary and post-secondary students in the past three academic years, the Committee concluded in the final report that multiple factors interacted and contributed to students' suicidal behavior. These factors included mental health issues, psychological concern, family relationship and adjustment problems, peer relationship problems, school adjustment and academic stress. The findings were comparable to the results of international studies.

6. To prevent student suicides, the Committee made various student-centred recommendations in the final report covering services at three different levels: (a) universal prevention strategies targeting all students; (b) selective prevention strategies targeting vulnerable students; and (c) indicated prevention strategies targeting students with suicidal risk. Its recommendations can be grouped into the following four strategies –

- (a) enhance early identification, improve mental health and foster help-seeking behaviour;
- (b) enhance parent education and family support, improve parent-child relationships and enhance family functioning;
- (c) advocate media professionalism and make good use of social media to support students; and
- (d) strengthen life planning education and provide articulation pathways.

A copy of the executive summary of the final report is at **Annex C**.

ADVICE SOUGHT

7. Members are invited to note and offer views on the Committee's findings and recommendations.

**Family Council Secretariat
December 2016**

防止學生自殺委員會 最終報告



Meeting with Family Council
2016年12月 8 日

背景

- 防止學生自殺委員會於2016年3月30日成立
- 成員來自社會各界(包括精神科、心理學、教育和社會服務，政府決策局及部門、家長及學生代表)

背景 - 職權範圍

- 根據最新所得的資料，並參考全球研究結果，分析香港過去三個學年學生自殺的個案，嘗試了解可能成因
- 就現時與防止學生自殺有關的服務提出改善建議
- 建議預防學生自殺的措施

3

背景

- 五個工作小組：
精神健康、學校、家庭、媒體、青年 / 大專院校
- 每個工作小組召集人會按需要邀請有關界別的專家及持份者加入



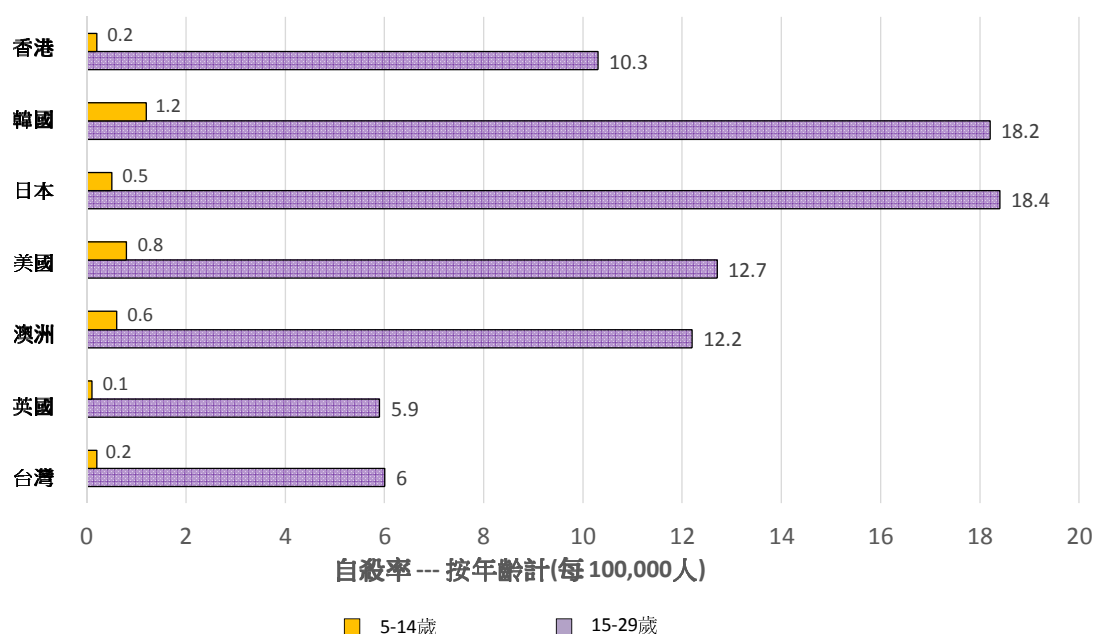
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背景

- 向不同持分者搜集意見，包括立法局議員及關注學生自殺的團體，例如：
 - 青年事務委員會
 - 香港社會服務聯會的家庭及社區服務組
 - 家庭議會轄下的家庭核心價值及家庭教育推廣小組委員會
 - 兒童權利論壇
 - 教育統籌委員會

5

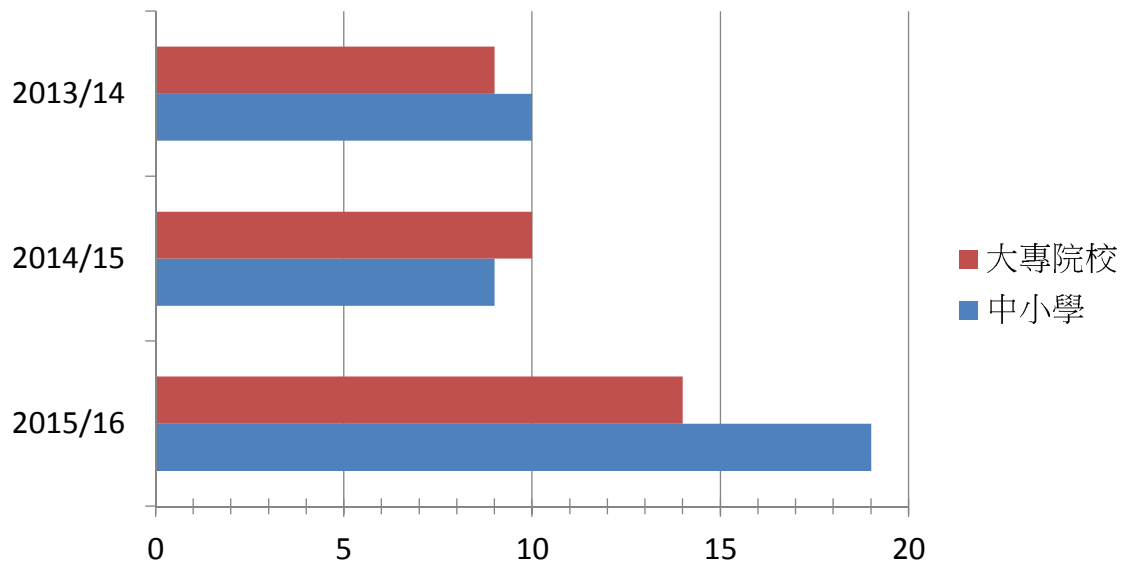
香港與其他發展國家及鄰近地區的比較



資料來源：香港大學香港賽馬會防止自殺研究中心

6

過去三學年學生自殺個案的數目



三年總數共71人

2013-2016 primary and secondary student suicide cases - Areas of concern (as at 27.5.2016, by EDB)



	Mental Illness ¹	Adjustment		Relationship		Emotion problems ⁶	1 area of concern	2 areas of concern	3 areas of concern	4 areas of concern
		Study-related ²	Family-related ³	Peers ⁴	Family ⁵					
	7 (21%)	27 (79%)		29 (85%)		20 (59%)				
1	x		x		x			✓		
2			x		x			✓		
3					x	x		✓		
4			x	x	x	x			✓	
5				x		x		✓		
6	x				x	x			✓	
7					x		✓			
8	x	x						✓		
9	x	x	x					✓		
10				x		x		✓		
11		x		x				✓		
12	x			x				✓		
13		x	x	x	x			✓		
14			x		x	x			✓	
15	x			x	x	x		✓		
16				x	x	x		✓		
17		x	x				✓			
18		x	x	x		x			✓	
19		x			x			✓		
20		x				x		✓		
21	x	x		x		x				✓
22		x	x		x	x			✓	
23			x		x	x			✓	
24			x		x	x			✓	
25	x	x			x	x				✓
26		x	x		x	x			✓	
27		x	x	x	x			✓		
28			x		x			✓		
29			x	x	x	x			✓	
30		x	x			x			✓	
31			x		x	x			✓	
32	x	x				x			✓	
33		x	x	x	x			✓		
34		x			x				✓	
	7 (21%)	19 (56%)	18 (53%)	14 (41%)	24 (71%)	20 (59%)	2 (6%)	17 (50%)	13 (38%)	2 (6%)

Note1: Cases with psychiatric diagnosis

Note2: Non-attending cases, repeaters or cases transferring to a new school

Note3: Cases with family debt, low income or parents working in Mainland

Note4: Cases with boy/girl relationship problems, isolation issues or poor peer relationship

Note5: Cases with family discord, conflict with parents, lack of family support or divorced/ single parents

Note6: Cases expressing negative thoughts/academic-related stress/ suicidal ideation

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Areas of concern in student suicide for post-secondary institutions



1. Psychological issues – e.g. worries about health, financial problems, study-related stress, work-related stress, stress about life.
2. School adjustment – e.g. adjusting to the university life
3. Family adjustment – e.g. from single-parent families and insufficient family support



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Messages from suicide students



- Size of word is proportional to the average rate of each word's appearance in each suicide note.
- Words with average rate lower than 1/1000 were removed.



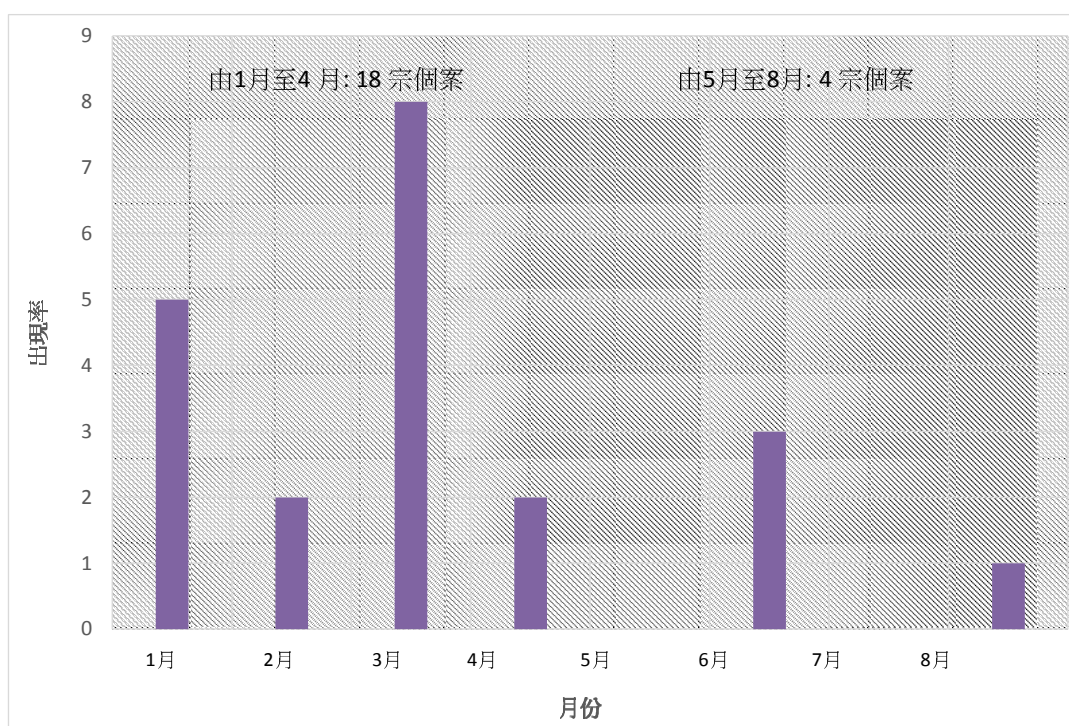
by primary and secondary school students



by post-secondary school students

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2016 年1月至8月發生的學生自殺個案



11

傳媒報道

- 傳媒報道的篇幅與學生自殺身亡的數字存在一定關係:

在2016年3月，傳媒報道最為廣泛及顯著，而當時就出現了學生接連自殺的事件

當傳媒明顯減少大篇幅或煽情報道，學生自殺身亡個案亦驟減:

由2016年1月至4月的18宗減至2016年5月至8月的4宗



危險因素



13

觀察

- 自殺非由單一原因引起
- 自殺行為前多有徵兆
- 大部分有精神健康問題的學生未被識別
- 自殺行為以男性較多
- 涉及中一及中四的個案有所增加
- 傳媒廣泛報道可觸發仿效自殺行為

14

傳媒報道

- 傳媒報道與學生自殺身亡關係:

數據顯示，2016年1月至4月的18宗減至2016年5月至8月的4宗

當傳媒明顯減少大篇幅或煽情報道，學生自殺身亡個案亦驟減，情況明顯改善



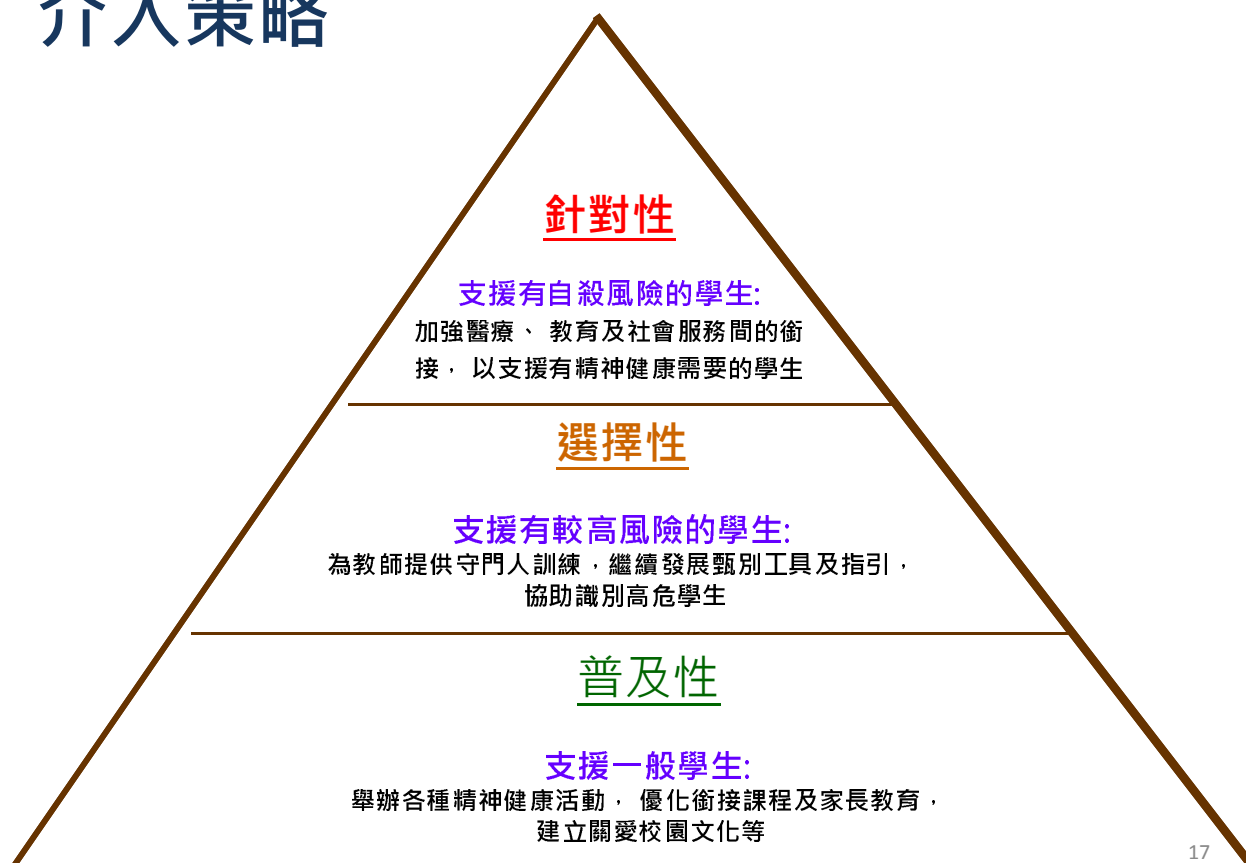
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方向

- 為確保制訂的建議以實證及實用為本，我們
 - 深入分析香港過去三個學年發生的學生自殺個案
 - 研究流行病學概況
 - 收集工作小組及不同持分者的意見
 - 了解現時香港預防自殺的工作，填補服務空隙

16

介入策略



建議

加強對家庭的支援



建議(一)

加強對學校及大專院校學生的支援



19

普及性層面

1. 加強對精神健康問題的意識，減低導致抗拒求助的負面標籤，締造一個能支援學生發展適應能力的環境

施行策略

- 加強跨界別協作
- 繼續加強校本「健康校園政策」
- 學校的價值教育加強精神健康、心理健康和生死教育的元素
- 營造正向、關愛與支持的校園以配合學生的全人發展
- **家校建立緊密溝通，加強現行的溝通渠道**

20

普及性層面

2. 加強支援學生面對學習環境及學習階段的轉變

施行策略

- 加強現時學校轉交學生相關資料予新學校的機制(學校應繼續加強家長教育，讓家長明白持續介入的重要性，從而同意轉交資料的安排)。
- 鼓勵學校在中一及中四的銜接課程中，加強關注學生的心理社交適應和調適能力
- 大專院校可考慮於學期內安排一段休息和放鬆的時間，學系人員及舍監亦應主動協助新生適應新環境

21

選擇性層面

3. 為教師、朋輩、大學人員及家長等提供「守門人」培訓
4. 進一步優化有助識別高危學生的甄別工具、指引及資料
5. 政府須加強轉介學生接受醫管局評估服務的安排，把徵求家長同意的做法常規化

22

針對性層面

6. 加強醫療、教育和社會服務之間的協調

- 食物及衛生局由2016/17學年起與教育局、醫管局及社署合作，開展一項為期兩年的先導計劃，設立一個包括醫護、教育及社會福利界別專業人士的校本跨專業平台 (委員會認為有自殺風險或精神健康問題的學生，需要學校、家庭和精神健康專業人員合力提供協助)。

7. 大專院校宜確保被識別為有精神健康問題的學生可容易地在校園或鄰近醫療機構 / 醫院獲得精神科及心理輔導服務

23

資源支援

8. 提供額外資源讓學校推廣精神及心理健康

9. 大專院校調配更多來自大學教育資助委員會及其他方面的資源，以加強推廣精神及心理健康、甄別服務及「守門人」訓練

24

建議(二)

加強對家庭的支援



25

普及性層面

10. 社署有系統地統籌、計劃和提供家庭生活及家長教育
11. 綜合家庭服務中心考慮安排外展教育計劃
12. 家長教育內容應包括有效及實際可行的管教技巧，提醒家長對子女應有合理期望，家庭與學校合作事宜委員會應積極推廣《快樂孩子約章》

26

普及性層面

13. 政府考慮推廣某月為家庭月，集政府與非政府機構之力，每年宣揚有意義的主題
14. 教育局應為學校就如何加強中學生與家長的正面溝通安排更多分享機會，亦可考慮進行相關研究

27

選擇性層面

15. 教育局應為家長提供「守門人」訓練，提高他們對學生精神健康問題及網絡欺凌徵兆的敏感度
16. 衛生署轄下母嬰健康院進一步向家長推廣和擴展其現有服務，並推廣至準父母及特別關顧單親、離婚 / 喪偶及再婚的家庭
17. 社署多推廣為處於危機的個人和家庭所提供的深入支援及輔導服務，並考慮簡化轉介程序

28

針對性層面

18. 社署應廣泛宣傳家庭支援計劃所提供的跟進和社區支援服務，支援有可能受到暴力對待或患有精神病的家庭成員，以及與社會關係疏離的家庭



29

建議(三)

加強傳統及社交媒體的角色



30

普及性層面

19. 政府應善用社交媒體舉辦和宣傳推廣心理及精神健康的活動
20. 借助致力防止自殺工作的組織的力量及相關研究，繼續推動媒體從業員以恰當及符合專業操守的方式報道自殺新聞



選擇性層面

21. 教導青少年社交媒體禮儀及如何面對社交媒體上的自殺報道
22. 持續推行網上外展輔導服務
23. 繼續進行和支持跨界別合作: 研究中心可聯同專業人士與社交媒體，繼續開發網上預防自殺工具、分享相關知識及進行研究等

建議(四)

推廣多元升學及就業途徑



33

推廣多元升學及就業途徑

24. 加強宣傳多元出路及資歷架構，及推廣多元智能和不同職業的認受性，幫助家長及學生認識生涯規劃的最新情況
25. 學校應繼續在課程規劃和學習活動中融入職業探索的元素，教育局亦應聯同學校及持份者繼續加強生涯規劃教育

34

建議(五)

其他與教育制度相關的意見



其他與教育制度相關的意見

26. 教育局考慮檢視教育制度的有關部分，適當地支援和處理學生及年輕人的發展及不同需要

- 提升學生處理壓力的能力
- 協助學生認識自己、接納自己的限制，發展個人潛能
- 認同、讚許及發展學生不同的天賦和能力



其他與教育制度相關的意見

- 委員認為長遠而言，教育制度應促進學生的全人發展，並協助中學生自我裝備，順利過渡至專上教育及之後的階段。
- 委員認為須透過制訂推廣精神健康的預防措施和檢視現行教育系統的某些相關部分，扭轉社會所崇尚的價值觀，以減輕學生所面對的壓力。

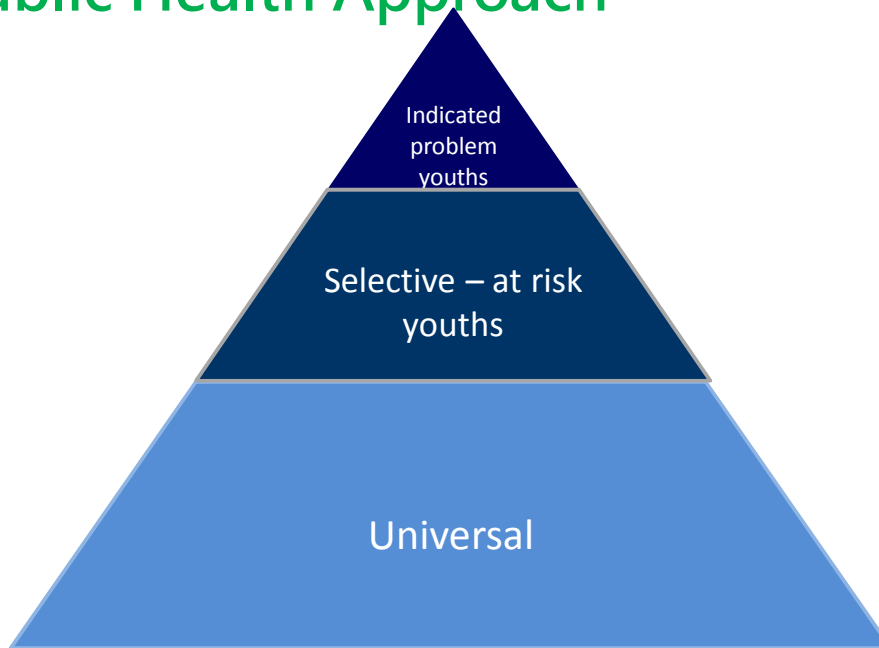
37

其他與教育制度相關的意見

- 委員亦鼓勵學校繼續定期檢視學與教範疇例如家課及評估政策，確保做法能切合不同學生的能力及需要。
- 在香港中學文憑考試（文憑試）成績之外，大專院校應同時承認學生在社會服務、體藝發展等範疇的其他學習經驗，務求收生制度更具彈性。委員認為大學應採納及廣泛宣傳各種升讀大專院校的途徑，收生結果亦應公佈讓學校、家長及學生知曉。

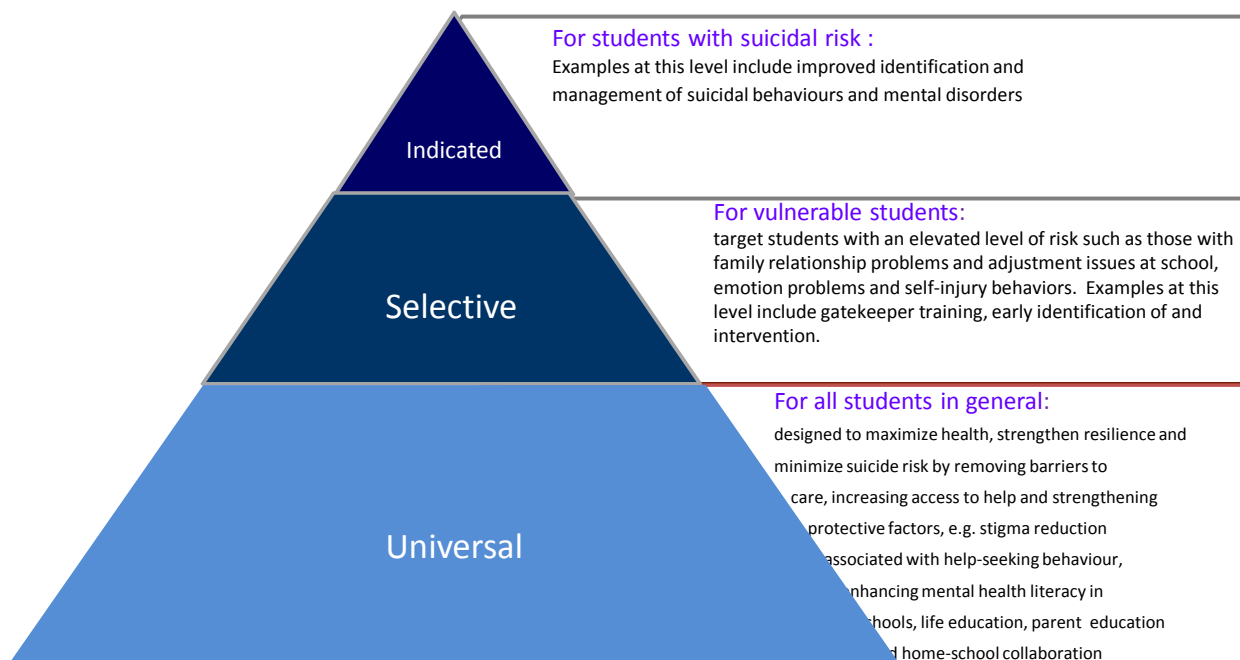
38

A Public Health Approach



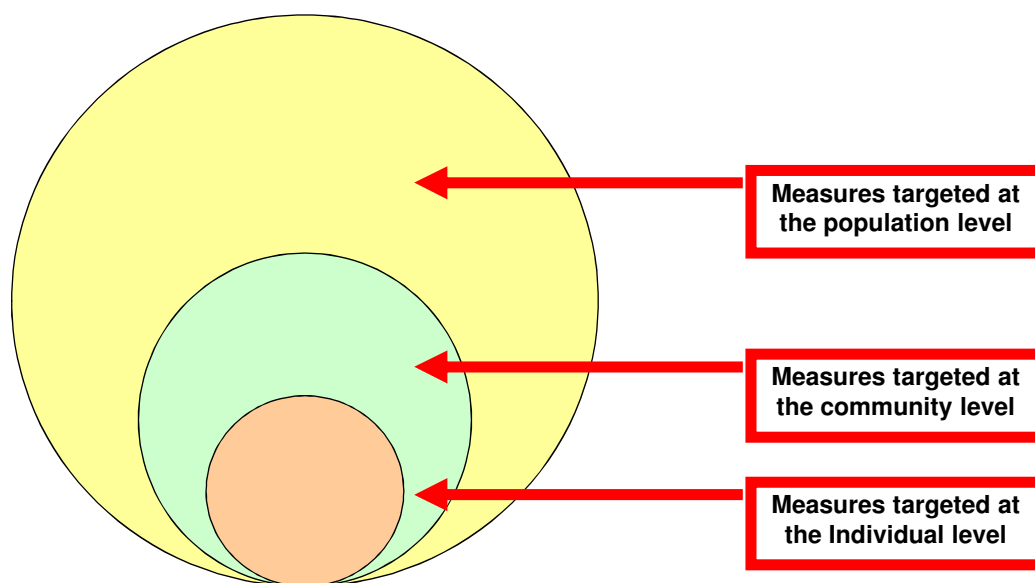
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Recommendations



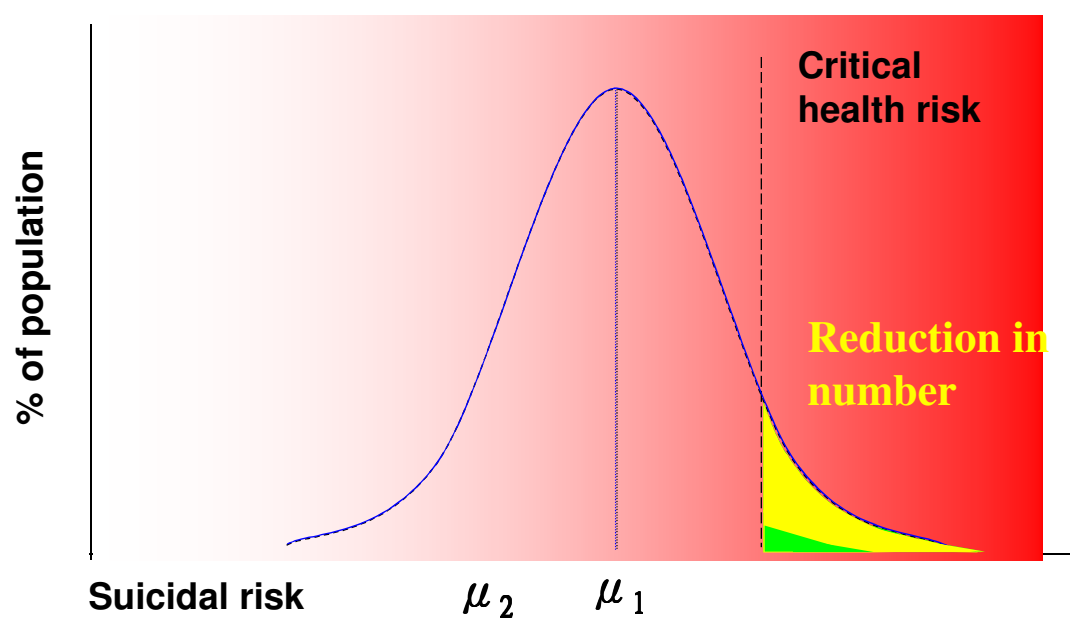
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Framework of mental health enhancement



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A Public Health Approach

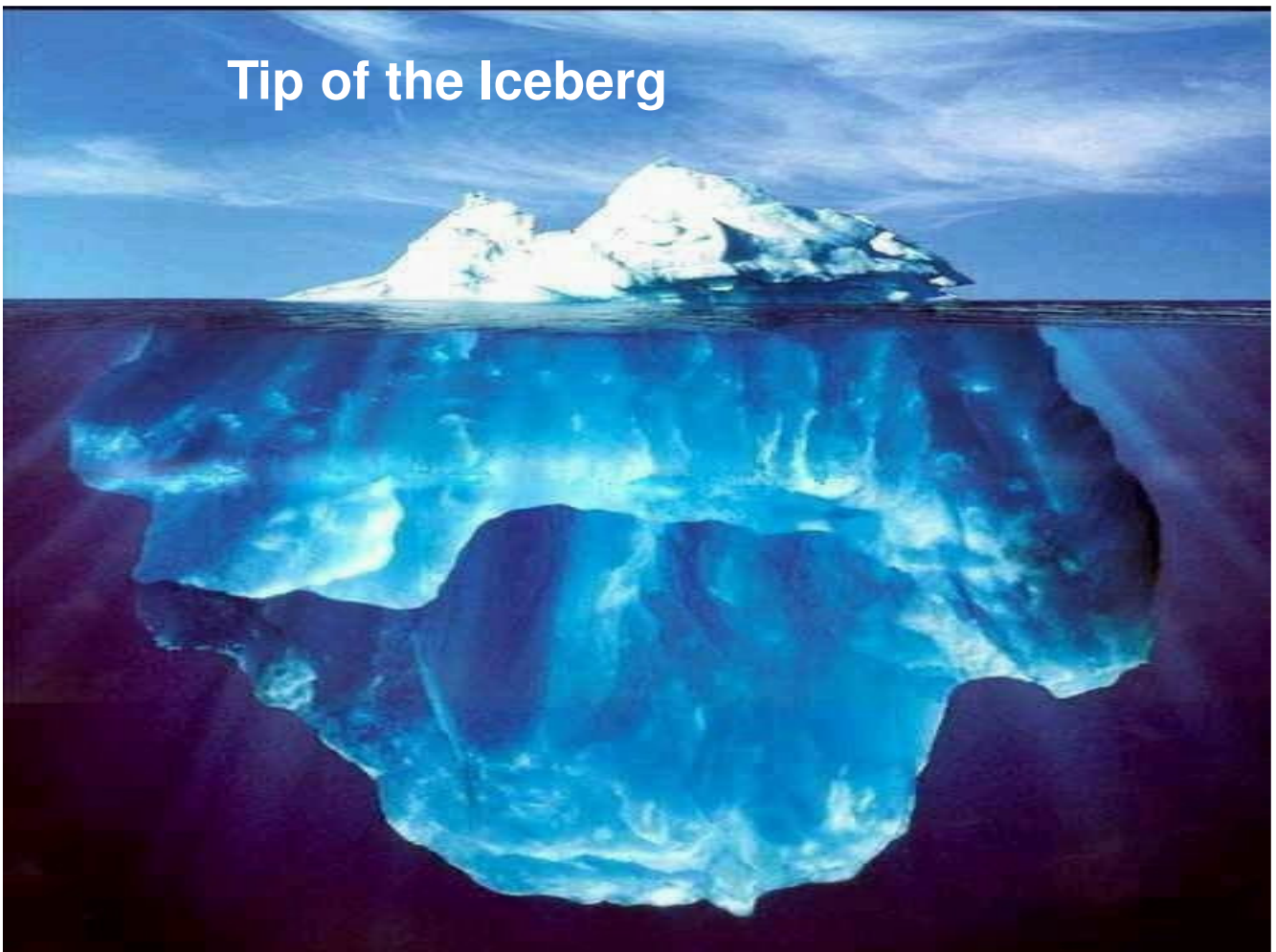


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FLOODING METAPHOR 洪水隱喻



Tip of the Iceberg



Analogy of a clock:

- second arm:
(political activities)
- Minute arm
(economic policy)
- Hour arm
(family policy)



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總結

通過政府、各持份者及所有社會人士的協作，定能為預防學生自殺找到更全面的對策，並締造互相關愛的环境支援學生的心理健康





多謝!

Extract of minutes of meeting of Sub-committee on
the Promotion of Family Core Values and Family Education on 23 August 2016

Item 3 – Briefing on the findings and recommendations of the Family Focus Group of the Committee on Prevention of Student Suicides (Paper SC PR 5/2016)

6. The Convenor briefed the meeting that in response to the student suicide spate in the 2015/16 school year, the Education Bureau (EDB) set up the Committee on Prevention of Student Suicides (the Committee) (防止學生自殺委員會)¹ on 30 March 2016 to look into the possible causes of student suicides and propose short, medium and long-term measures to prevent student suicides at primary, secondary and tertiary education levels. To facilitate discussion of preventive measures at different levels, five Focus Groups on Mental Health, Families, Schools, Media and Youth/Post-secondary Institutions were set up under the Committee.

7. Upon the invitation, Mr Henry TONG, Convenor of the Family Focus Group (FFG), Mr Peter NG, Assistant Director (Youth and Corrections), Social Welfare Department / Member of FFG and Ms Doris LEE, Senior Specialist (Education Services), EDB / Secretary of FFG shared findings and recommendations of FFG with the aid of the PowerPoint presentation (**Annex C** to Paper SC_PR_5/2016).

8. Noting that each case of student suicides had complicated underlying causes and was triggered by different factors such as problems of mental health, emotion, adaptation and interpersonal relationship, FFG recommended adopting the World Health Organisation's three-tier model of intervention in deliberating the recommendations. Specifically, the recommendations were directed towards three levels, namely, "Universal", "Selective" and "Indicated" to cater for the needs of the different population and risk groups. Its key recommendations were –

- (a) to enhance family life and parent education;
- (b) to improve gatekeeper training;
- (c) to enhance assistance for specific vulnerable families; and
- (d) to broaden the selection criteria of tertiary institutions.

¹ The Committee is chaired by Professor Paul YIP, Director of the Hong Kong Jockey Club Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention at the University of Hong Kong (CSR), with members comprising school, parent, youth and student representatives, professionals from the healthcare and social welfare sectors, and representatives of different government bureaux and departments.

9. On the front of parent education, FFG considered it necessary to promote “positive parenting” with focus on change of attitude, knowledge and skills covering developmental, preventive and remedial levels. Parents should learn to respect the uniqueness and diverse development of children, identify and nurture the multiple intelligences of children, support the children’s development of emotional intelligences and adversity quotient in facing adversities in life, bring up children with virtue and inculcate hope and gratitude amongst young people. Parents should also manage their own expectations and make reasonable demands on children according to their aptitude and interest, understand cyber bullying which children might face and gather how they and their children could deal with it, communicate with school early when children show adjustment or emotional issues, build their own resilience and seek professional help when needed. It also recommended, amongst others, promoting a “Happy Child Charter” on healthy family life and parenting, and promoting May as the family month to raise awareness of issues relating to families.

10. Members agreed that parent education should be further promoted and their comments were summarised below –

- (a) early intervention at the kindergarten stage was supported and parent education as well as support to disadvantaged families, including minority groups, new arrival family, family with abusive parent, family member with mental health problem, etc. should be strengthened;
- (b) to strengthen support to students, connectedness between teachers, as caring adults, and students should be developed as a second tier to supplement and back up the communication between parents and children;
- (c) to avoid unnecessary comparison among peers, individual uniqueness and multiple intelligences should be recognised by parents and widely promulgated in the community;
- (d) apart from enhancing the gatekeeper training for parents and teachers, mentorship programme should be provided for youngsters in need;
- (e) life and death education (生死教育) promoting positive perspective towards life and death and developing creativity in solving problems should be further advocated in secondary schools and tertiary institutions;

- (f) education on mental illness should be strengthened, e.g. through production of promotional videos, with a view to enhancing the public's awareness and minimising its confusion with emotional problems. Since mental health problem of parents might be one of the factors associated with student suicides, more resources should be deployed to address the issues of long waiting time and high medical fee;
- (g) apart from social workers, consideration could be given to allocating additional resources for provision of medical staff and more teachers to secondary schools;
- (h) long working hours and heavy workload of parents were underlying factors of various family problems. To reach out to busy parents, parenting seminars and workshops might be arranged in commercial districts during lunch hours;
- (i) the concept of multiple-pathways in career planning should be promoted to counter that academic performance was the most important factor associated with one's future achievement;
- (j) more collaboration among relevant stakeholders and government bureaux/departments helped achieve better synergy and avoid duplication of resources; and
- (k) suicide was a cultural issue and social media had significant effect on the community, especially the youth. Consideration might be given from the perspective as to how to change the culture by shifting the community's focus from competition among students to encouraging positive thinking and enhancing social responsibility in the use of social media.

11. Mr Tong responded that various sectors should work together to prevent student suicides with more concerted efforts, support and resources on promotion of family life education and parent education. Ms Lee added that all five Focus Groups would prioritise their recommendations having regard to the impact, urgency, feasibility and resources implications for the Committee's consideration of measures to prevent student suicides. It was expected that the Committee would submit a full report to EDB by end October 2016. The Convenor thanked representatives of FFG for the sharing and remarked that the Family Council and/or the Sub-committee might make reference to the Committee's report in considering the themes of future promotional and publicity activities.

Executive Summary

To address the spate of student suicides in the 2015/16 school year, the Education Bureau (EDB), among others, set up the Committee on Prevention of Student Suicides (the Committee) on 30 March 2016, which was tasked to (1) examine the possible causes of recent student suicides in Hong Kong based on the analysis of the latest available data as well as reference drawing from global research; (2) advise on the areas of existing services related to suicide prevention that could be strengthened; and (3) propose measures to prevent student suicides.

2. The Committee comprises 21 members from different sectors of the community including public health experts, psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, teachers, principals, parents, youth and government officials. It is chaired by Professor Paul Yip, the Director of the Centre for Suicide Research and Prevention (CSRP) at the University of Hong Kong. Five Working Groups on Mental Health, Schools, Families, Media and Youth/Post-secondary Institutions have been set up, with the aim to providing more in-depth discussion in each of the areas. The Committee has examined the 71 suicide cases in primary schools, secondary schools and post-secondary institutions in the last three school/academic years, as well as other related information (including reports from the Coroner's Court, the Police, the Department of Health (DH), the Social Welfare Department (SWD), the EDB, schools and other related reports).

3. Suicide is a complicated social problem with multifactorial causes. The present investigation reveals that multiple factors have interacted and contributed to students' suicidal behaviours, including mental health issues, psychological concerns, family relationship and adjustment problems, peer relationship problems, school adjustment and academic stress. The findings are comparable to results of international studies (World Health Organisation, 2014).

4. In addition, local studies from the CSRP revealed that media reporting of student suicides might have a role in triggering copycat suicidal behaviours among youth. The Committee appreciates the media's apposite responses to its appeal in news reporting, and with the significant improvement in media reporting there was a rapid decline of suicide number in the past four months. Data indicated that there were 18 cases in the four-month period from January to April 2016 and 4 cases in the next four months from May to August 2016 with the decline in magnitude of media reporting regarding student suicides.

5. The recommendations proposed by the Committee strive to address the existing service gaps and the needs of children and young people. In line with the World Health Organisation (WHO) guiding principles, these recommendations are directed towards three levels, namely, "Universal", "Selective" and "Indicated", to cater for the needs of different population and risk groups. Specifically, the following areas of services at different levels should be covered: (i)

Universal prevention strategies targeting all students; (ii) Selective prevention strategies targeting vulnerable students; and (iii) Indicated prevention strategies targeting students with suicidal risk.

6. To actualise the expected outcomes of any proposed improvement measures, ownership and leadership with commitment from stakeholders in the community are of utmost importance. We should keep in view the systems for monitoring and evaluating the strategies to prevent student suicides so as to help formulate effective and focused measures. The section to follow sets out the recommendations put forward by the Committee after thorough deliberation.

A. Enhancement of Student Support at Schools and Post-Secondary Institutions

Universal (to support students in general)

i. To ensure our students can be better supported, we should raise the awareness about mental well-being and enhance mental health literacy among students, teachers and parents, as well as improve and maintain the mental well-being of our students. We should aim to reduce stigma that leads to refusal to seek help, and to create a supportive environment that encourages students to develop adaptive coping skills. Various implementation strategies are recommended.

(a) Cross-sector collaboration should be strengthened in

promoting students' mental health in schools in an integrated manner. For instance, riding on the platform of the Joyful@HK Campaign organised by the DH to increase public engagement in promoting mental well-being, the Joyful@School Campaign has been launched in schools jointly by the DH and the EDB in the 2016/17 school year. It aims at increasing students' engagement in promoting mental well-being, cultivating a positive and accepting culture towards help-seeking as well as promoting knowledge on effective ways to handle challenging situations. Schools can submit applications to the Quality Education Fund for funding not exceeding \$150,000 to implement related activities under the Joyful@School Campaign.

- (b) Schools have to continue enhancing the school-based Healthy School Policy (HSP) to promote and maintain the physical, mental and social well-being of students, to empower them with positive values, proactive attitude and skills to face the challenges in personal growth, thereby enhancing their adaptability and resilience against adversity, and promoting their mental well-being. Also, there are various programmes/projects developed by different bureaux/departments aiming to increase students' resilience and adversity coping skills. The EDB should work with different bureaux/departments and the school sector to

review and consolidate existing resources, and to facilitate schools to optimise the use of these resources and maximise students' learning opportunities.

- (c) As part of value education in schools, the elements of mental health and well-being as well as life and death education have to be strengthened, aiming to, among others, enhance students' knowledge about mental health issues and cultivate a positive attitude of help-seeking through destigmatisation. Related topics should also be offered to students in post-secondary institutions through general education or similar courses.
- (d) It is important to create a positive, caring and supportive school culture for the holistic development of students. Specifically, schools must continue to provide adequate opportunities for students to experience success in different aspects of school life and foster a culture where students learn to appreciate their strengths and diversity. Schools are also encouraged to continue reviewing their existing practices in the learning and teaching domain as well as homework and assessment policies on a regular basis to ensure that they are able to cater to students with different abilities, needs and capacities. Besides, the Government should continue to provide additional resources to support schools to develop students' strengths and abilities as well as

cater for diversity.

- (e) Schools have to continue establishing close communication with parents and strengthen existing communication channels for parents' suggestions and enquiries regarding school-based policies and practices such as homework and assessment policies. Schools and/or parent-teacher associations are also advised to offer parent training on topics such as effective parenting skills, strategies to promote students' mental well-being and availability of multiple articulation pathways to enhance parents' understanding of students' learning and developmental needs. Schools can make use of the annual Subsidy for Home-School Co-operation Activities or the Special Home-School Co-operation Grant disbursed by the EDB in March 2016 for organising home-school activities based on different school circumstances and diverse student needs.
- ii. Enhancing support to students in their change of learning environment and change of level of studies is important. Some implementation strategies are recommended.
 - (a) The EDB must strengthen the existing mechanism for schools to transfer students' related information to new schools so that the schools of upper levels can have a better understanding of their students' developmental and support needs for helping them to cope with the adjustment issues

arising from transition. As for schools, they have to continue strengthening parent education to increase their understanding of the importance of continued intervention such that parents would give their consent to transfer the information.

- (b) The EDB should encourage schools to put more emphasis on students' psycho-social adjustment and adaptation, and include topics such as self-esteem, problem solving skills, stress management, positive emotions and positive relationships in their bridging programmes for Secondary 1 and Secondary 4 students.
- (c) Post-secondary institutions should be encouraged to schedule a period of time for rest and relief during an academic term (e.g. a reading week or period). Also, faculty members and hall wardens should play an active role in helping the new students to adapt to the new environment.

Selective (to support vulnerable students)

- iii. The EDB should provide gatekeeper training for people around students, including teachers, peers, university personnel and parents to enhance early identification of and intervention for at-risk students. Considering the fact that adolescents nowadays tend to share their concerns and feelings more with peers, gatekeeper training for peers is recommended to educate youth

proper messages on how to respond properly to peers' suicidal messages and facilitate them to identify peers in need.

- iv. The EDB should further enhance screening tools, guidelines and materials that assist the identification of at-risk students in order to facilitate frontline educators' and parents' suicide prevention work. For post-secondary institutions, health screening to new students using effective channels such as completion of questionnaire through electronic means is recommended in order to identify at an early stage students at-risk or those with a history of mental health problems.
- v. To ensure students with mental health needs could receive timely and appropriate treatment and support, the Government has to strengthen the arrangement for referring the students concerned to the Hospital Authority (HA) for assessment by regularising the practice to obtain parental consent both for making referral for psychiatric evaluation and for the HA to pass the psychiatric reports to schools and Educational Psychologists for follow-up. Post-secondary institutions should also ensure new students who have been identified to require counselling services to be followed up with the support from professionals.

Indicated (to support students with suicidal risk)

- vi. The Government should strengthen the interface among medical, education and social service to ensure students in need receive

timely mental health support services. In this connection, a two-year pilot scheme “Student Mental Health Support Scheme” on setting up school-based multi-disciplinary platforms involving healthcare, education and social welfare professionals has been steered by the Food and Health Bureau (FHB), in collaboration with the EDB, the HA and the SWD starting from the 2016/17 school year. The Committee recommends that the services be considered to be regularised with enhancement based on its evaluative outcome.

- vii. Post-secondary institutions are advised to enable students identified to have mental health problems to have easy access to psychiatric and psychological services on campus or nearby health/hospital facilities. Besides, post-secondary institutions are advised to consider around-the-clock campus-run services (e.g. 24-hour hotlines) to provide mental health first-aid to students in need.

Resources Support

- viii. The EDB should provide schools with additional resources in respect of boosting mental health and well-being education in schools to take forward the professional tasks as recommended in the three levels of universal, selective and indicated in the foregoing paragraphs.

- ix. Post-secondary institutions should consider allocating more of the resources they receive from the University Grants Committee (UGC) and other sources to enhance their promotion of mental health and well-being, screening services, gatekeeper training and follow-up support for students at risk.

B. Enhancement of Support to Families

Universal

- x. The SWD is recommended to take the lead to systematically coordinate the planning and delivery of family life and parent education (FL&PE) such that the concerted efforts of government bureaux and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) could fill the service gaps (e.g. reaching the hidden parents) and address the needs of parents.
- xi. The Integrated Family Services Centres (IFSCs) and Integrated Services Centres (ISCs) should consider arranging outreach education programmes to cater for the needs of families of different strata including the hard-to-reach or even hidden parents, and the disadvantaged families which are busy to make ends meet, so as to facilitate their participation in the FL&PE.
- xii. Parent education should outline solid practices on healthy family life and effective parenting skills, and address the issues of some

parents having unrealistic expectations and exorbitant demands on their offspring. The Committee on Home-School Co-operation under the EDB should take up an active role to promote the “Happy Kids Charter”, which was developed by the Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Centre of the Queen Mary Hospital and received positive feedback from the participating schools.

- xiii. It is recommended that the Government consider promoting a month as the family month, pooling the Government and NGOs’ efforts in promulgating meaningful themes such as positive communication within families (for example, reference can be made to the United Nations’ International Day of Families on 15 May of each year).
- xiv. The EDB should arrange more sharing for schools on effective practices in fostering positive communication between secondary school students and their parents. Consideration may also be given to conducting research such as on how parents and children could effectively communicate in the 21st Century, especially with the widespread use of digital devices.

Selective

- xv. The EDB should provide gatekeeper training for parents to develop their sensitivity to students’ signs of mental health issues and cyber bullying.

xvi. The Maternal and Child Health Centres of the DH are recommended to strengthen their services to parents, needy families and prospective parents, such as programmes on positive parenting skills and individual counselling for those having parenting difficulties.

xvii. The SWD is suggested to conduct more promotion about the intensive counselling and support service for individuals and families in crisis provided by the IFSCs, ISCs and Integrated Community Centres for Mental Wellness to facilitate needy families to seek for help. The SWD should also consider streamlining the referral procedures to facilitate the needy families to receive timely service.

Indicated

xviii. The SWD is suggested to widely publicise outreach services provided in Family Support Programme for families with members at risk or with mental illness and those with social isolation so that they could receive timely support.

C. Enhancement of Roles of Traditional and Social Media

Universal

xix. The Government is recommended to make good use of the social media in organising and propagating activities on mental

health promotion. For example, collaborating with Facebook or YouTubers to spread positive messages of the Joyful@School Campaign.

- xx. Cross-sector collaboration is important and we should ride on the strength of those organisations working on suicide prevention and make reference to relevant studies. For example, the CSRP may help engage the media professionals and journalism students in promoting appropriate and ethical practices of suicide reporting through the media. The principles and guidelines as set out in the handbook “Recommendations on Suicide Reporting & Online Information Dissemination for Media Professionals” could be advocated.

Selective

- xxi. Youth should be educated social media etiquette to prevent the occurrence of cyberstalking or bullying, and proper messages on how to respond to suicide reporting through social media. In this connection, Facebook, the University and other NGO partners had jointly published a “Help a Friend” booklet to act as a guide on how to help emotionally distressed or even suicidal individuals, which should be promoted to youth as well as the wider community.
- xxii. Cyber-based outreaching services should be explored and supported subject to the evaluation of its effectiveness, given

that cyber-based outreaching services are welcomed by youth nowadays.

- xxiii. Cross-sector collaborative efforts should continue and be supported. For example, the CSRP may line up with social media platforms in collaboration with related professionals to continue developing online suicide prevention tools such that when users notice any friends having suicidal tendency or exhibiting self-harm behaviour, they could report the case and obtain relevant information to offer support and help. The CSRP may also continue to promote good practices of social media engagement with vulnerable youth, share the knowledge to the wider community, and conduct ongoing research in understanding the pattern of social media usage of vulnerable individuals so that more timely intervention can be provided.

D. Promotion of Multiple Articulation Pathways

- xxiv. The Government should launch more publicity about alternative pathways and Qualification Framework to help parents and students learn about the latest in life planning and make appropriate choices that suit students' abilities, interests and aspirations.
- xxv. Schools should continue to incorporate elements of career exploration in their curriculum planning and learning activities

as well as help students in need to explore multiple exit and re-entry pathways. The EDB in collaboration with schools and stakeholders should continue to step up career and life education to better prepare students in their exploration of multiple pathways, and to share the information with parents.

E. Other Related Views on the Education System

xxvi. Based on the existing available data and information, the analysis of the 71 suicide cases shows that the possible causes of student suicide involve multiple factors (including mental illness, relationship and personal problem, family discord, academic concern, etc.) and there is no substantial direct link between student suicides and the education system. Even though present findings obtained from evidence-based case analysis do not reflect that student suicides are originated from the education system, the Committee opines that it is important to review the relevant domains of the education system in order to strengthen the support and protect the students and youth from the risk of suicide. The following would be keys in enhancing support to students and youth:

- (a) Students and youth should be helped to strengthen their ability to handle stress, so that the knowledge, skills, beliefs and values, etc. they acquire in primary and

secondary schools can effectively prepare them for coping with university life or challenges beyond secondary school life;

- (b) School is a very important place for young people to understand themselves, accept their limitations and develop their potentials. The sense of achievement attained while in school does not necessarily have to come from academic pursuit, but can be from other aspects of school life. Therefore, the system as a whole should recognise non-academic achievements; and
- (c) Students' talents and abilities in different fields should be recognised, appreciated and developed.

The Committee recommends that the EDB consider reviewing relevant domains in the education system, duly support and address the developmental and diverse needs of students and young people.

Conclusion

7. The recommendations put forward by the Committee are not meant to be exhaustive. The Committee aims to provide timely and effective measures in response to the sudden student suicide spate, so as to tackle the copycat effect of suicides and to address immediate

concerns of students, parents and teachers. Also, it provides evidence-based suggestions to enhance resilience and well-being of our school children. One important element is to restore the support system for our students such that they feel connected with their families, friends and the community. Suicide is everyone's business of which we should all take ownership and leadership. We all can be a gatekeeper for those who are vulnerable. The society should keep in view related systems, as well as monitor and evaluate the prevention strategies for student suicides. The suicide prevention strategies and supporting services could be evaluated continuously in response to the rapid change of our society. We trust that with concerted effort of the Government, different stakeholders and the community at large, a comprehensive and integrated response to student suicide can be achieved and a caring environment can be cultivated to support students' well-being.