



## 03 What Parents Should Know

The kindergarten student counselling service scheme was first launched in some of the kindergartens in the academic year 2010/2011, and as a pilot project was later implemented in all kindergartens in the following academic year 2011/2012. The scheme mainly provides counselling service for students, parents and teachers. With regard to students, this scheme aims to improve the psychological quality of children at the infant education level and promote their physical and mental development. As for parents, this scheme aims at improving their parenting skills to promote the healthy development of their children. When it comes to teachers, the supporting staff of the scheme (including professionals of social work, psychological counselling or infant education), visit schools and jointly organise relevant activities with teachers, help identify students with special educational needs, make appropriate intervention and refer resources to them accordingly.

Unlike the school-based counselling service for primary and secondary students, the kindergarten student counselling service scheme does not send support staff to schools on a fixed schedule. Instead, the staff provide schools with support in accordance with their needs on a flexible schedule. Thus, the scheme can better cater for the needs of students, parents and schools.

Since the kindergarten student counselling service scheme has been implemented for more than one academic year, the Centre of Psycho-pedagogical Support and Special Education of the Education and Youth Affairs Bureau has invited two support staff from two kindergartens to share their experience of providing services for the schools and their comments on the scheme. They are Miss Sam Lai Seong (hereinafter referred to as Sam) from Chan Sui Ki Perpetual Help College and Miss Leong Choi Hong (hereinafter referred to as Leong) from Hou Kong Middle School Kindergarten.

**Question: What programmes have been carried out in your kindergartens? Would you please introduce in details?**

**Sam and Leong:** Since kindergarten students are very young, their concentration and cognitive ability are relatively weak. Thus, when we design activities, we must bear in mind that the activities should not be too long but should be related to daily life. For instance, we have organised sex education activities (teaching kindergarten students to know their bodies, how to protect their private parts and the differences between boys and girls), social etiquette and emotional management activities, etc. With regard to parents, we would assist them to improve their parenting skills and methods. We would also hold family activities and distribute printed parenting tips for them. Concerning teachers, we would hold more workshops to teach them how to identify students with special educational needs.

**Sam:** As far as activities are concerned, "Experience African Drum Family Day" is quite a unique one. Parents and children, by playing various musical instruments together, can improve the relationship and communication through this activity. Besides, we did a questionnaire survey of parent-child relationship and smart babies so that parents could understand the physical and mental development of their children.

**Question: How were the activities received by parents and students? What were the key issues that you had to pay attention to when designing activities?**

**Sam and Leong:** Generally speaking, parents and students actively participated in our activities.



**Sam:** The activities for kindergarten students should be diversified, concrete and close to daily life. Only by doing this could students easily understand the ideas. With regard to parents, we mainly conduct parent seminars and family activities. We would also give them concrete and real-life examples to enhance their parenting skills.

**Leong:** Student activities should be interesting and amusing. They should allow students to learn through games. As for parents, seminars help to improve their communication skills with their children and encourage them to think positively when they need to handle their children's problems.

**What are the common problems of kindergarten students?**

**Sam and Leong:** Students at different stages have different needs. For instance, I1 students may have problems in adapting to school life and observing rules in class. As for I2 and I3 students, they may have difficulty in getting along with peers, being egocentric and bad-tempered, some may also experience difficulty in academic performance.

**Leong:** There are some problems which deserve more attention. For example, some students would hit others because they do not know how to express their feelings; some refuse to observe classroom rules and follow teachers' instructions; some don't get along well with their peers. If we can identify these problems timely, we can intervene and provide timely and appropriate support. It also helps the future development of the students.

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**Question: Do you have any unforgettable experience to share with us?**

**Leong:** I have been working in the kindergarten counselling service for nearly two years. I am very delighted to have established a good relationship with the students and to see them learning happily and growing healthily in the school. There is a student called Wa whose family has given me a memorable experience. Wa was brought to and picked up from school by his parents every day. He got along well with his peers in class, and he had stable emotional behaviours too. Wa's parents also actively participated in school activities. Once a teacher met Wa's parents at a parent seminar. When they talked about how Wa behaved in school, the teacher found that it was Wa's parents who asked him to greet others every day and to treat others politely. On their way to and from the school, his parents would also use this opportunity to know about Wa's life in class. Then, they would praise him and give him advice. Thus, Wa's good behaviour was, in fact, the result of his parents' time, effort, patience and love in teaching him.

**Sam:** I have a similar experience too. There was a student who could not pay attention in class and was always in a bad temper. However, she had very sound sleep during the afternoon nap. At first, I thought she was not feeling well or she had poorer concentration. After observing her for a period of time and talking to her parents, I found that she stayed up till 11 p.m. and was even watching television with her parents at that time. No wonder she could not pay attention in class. Later, I met her parents and told them the importance of adequate rest to their daughter's learning and her physical and mental development. Her parents then collaborated with the school and there was great improvement in the student's situation.

**Question: Would you please give some advice to parents?**

**Leong:** Nowadays, many families are dual-income families. Parents are always busy with their work and some of them even have to work on shifts. Thus, they don't have much time to spend with their children. Despite this reality, children do need care and guidance from their parents. Therefore, parents must arrange time to get to know their children's everyday life, communicate with them, and teach them in a positive manner. Only in this way can they nurture a good parent-child relationship. Besides, if parents suspect that their children may have special educational needs, they don't need to panic or feel helpless. They can discuss the situation with the school to make proper arrangements. Similarly, if teacher notices that the student may have special educational needs, he/she can talk to the parents first. Then, through home-school collaboration, they can assist the student in getting appropriate educational placement.

**Sam:** Children are like a blank sheet of paper and parents are like a magic photocopier. If parents want such words as polite, respectful, not greedy and not lazy to be printed on these blank sheets of paper, the magic photocopiers can deeply imprint these words on them. In other words, it is far more important for parents to teach by being a good example rather than to teach by telling their children what to do. They cannot say one thing and do another. For instance, if they forbid their children to play computer games but they themselves play them any time they want, or if they prohibit their children to litter but they litter all the time, the children will imitate their parents' behaviours. Therefore, parents should be the examples and role models for their children. If they are able to do so, I believe that these blank sheets of paper will certainly be able to show bright and beautiful colours. Besides, kindergarten students are at the prime time of physical and mental development and they display thirst for knowledge. Thus, sufficient rest and a balanced diet are beneficial to the healthy physical and psychological development of students.

**Comments and Conclusion**

At the stage of infant education, children begin to explore new things and learn information from their environment. However, they still have not developed the ability to filter such information. Thus, it is necessary for them to have the guidance from parents. Once children go to school, they will have less time at home. If parents want to know more about their children, they have to contact and communicate with the school. If parents communicate with the school more often, they not only can have a better understanding of their children's progress and learning in the school, but also can take the teachers' advice and assist their children to improve their weaknesses. Parents should seize the opportunity to build up a good relationship with their children and teach them properly when their children are still young. It helps to nurture a good mentality and a healthy character of their children in the future.

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