

Message from the Chairperson - Towards Full Integration of Students with Disabilities

Towards full integration of students with disabilities



Ms. Anna Wu, EOC Chairperson

Education is fundamental to the development of human potential and to full participation in society. Throughout history, education has proved to be the most powerful equalizer and an agent of change. It can make all the difference to an individual's life.

Benefits of Integrated Education

Since 1997, a very important change has taken place in Hong Kong's education system: children with disabilities have been accepted into ordinary primary schools. However, despite the efforts to promote integrated education, many students with disabilities are still educated in segregated environments. As many schools are unprepared to admit them, their choices are limited.

Experience has shown that when children with and without disabilities learn together, they also learn from each other. The peer support has produced a positive mutual learning environment. Apart from the educational values, this is a crucial step towards integration in the community.

Last year, the EOC issued the Code of Practice on Education (the Code) under the Disability Discrimination Ordinance (DDO) to provide practical guidance for educators on making provisions for students with disabilities.

Need for Reasonable Accommodation

During the process of consultation on the Code, many in the education sector were concerned about the physical accessibility problems faced by schools, the availability of equipment and assistive devices, the lack of experience and training for teachers, the lack of appropriate curriculum and assessment for students. All these are very important questions. The law requires reasonable accommodation to be provided in each case, and for integrated schools to operate well, there must be an environment of support and resources for them.

Sometimes, reasonable accommodation would require that a student be provided with a tailored curriculum and a different teaching method. Assessment methods may also need to be tailored to meet the student's individual need. For instance, a student who has difficulty in writing due to cerebral palsy needs to be given extra time to complete a written examination.

SLD as a disability

The estimate of children with Specific Learning Disability (SLD) is 10%. Disability under the DDO is defined to include specifically a disorder or malfunction that results in the person learning differently from a person without the disorder or malfunction. Under our law, SLD, a disability associated with brain functions, **is a disability**. This is an important point to bear in mind because it is this law which makes education with reasonable accommodation a right, and not a matter of discretion. And most importantly, given the right diagnosis and learning strategy, students with SLD perform just as well as other students without SLD, and sometimes better.

The controversies surrounding these issues are continuing. For instance, there is a stream of thought that SLD should be classified as a learning difference and not as a disability. Using the description “learning difference” may reduce stigmatization. To avoid or reduce stigmatization whenever possible is always desirable. What is also important, however, is to recognize SLD as a disability and that parents and educators must learn to detect that early to ensure timely delivery of appropriate remedies.

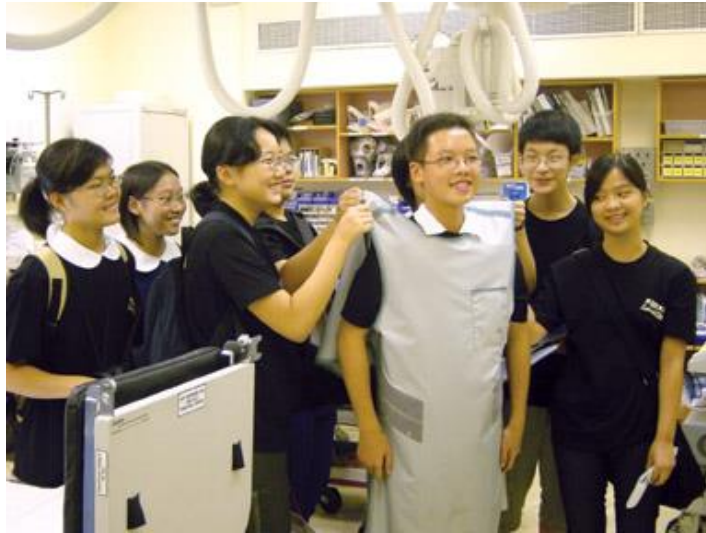
Countering negative stereotypes

Negative mindset can be extremely pervasive and damaging to integration in the community. In the survey we carried out earlier this year, students interviewed tended to pay attention only to the constraints and limitations of people with disabilities (PWDs). Students were hesitant towards personal commitment and cautious about the social consequences. In particular, there was a fear of threat and unpredictability in relation to PWDs. All respondents said that their impression of PWDs came largely from the mass media. The respondents were still largely under the negative influences of many prevailing assumptions that PWDs would be more comfortable and better educated in special instead of integrated schools. While about one-third of the students who had come in contact with PWDs tended to find social contact with them acceptable, most students viewed the exclusion of PWDs from mainstream society normative. Such attitudes curtail the opportunities of social contact for children with and without disabilities and reduce the chance of integration within the community.

Equal educational opportunity is a right as well as an investment in human capital. Education must cater for the diverse needs, styles and rate of learning. The key words must be effective education for all, with or without disabilities. We need to build social and physical environments that are accessible for all.

"Career Challenge" Breaks Down Barriers

"Career Challenge" Breaks Down Barriers



The Commission organized its first youth mentorship programme "Career Challenge" during October and November 2002, in an attempt to break down barriers formed by stereotyping, which often limits career choices for young women and men.

Eleven outstanding achievers (refer to the name list on pg.6) from a wide spectrum of professions served as the mentors for this programme. Ninety Form 2 and 3 students selected from some 500 applicants, were divided into small groups and spent half a day with each of the mentors, observing him/her at work. There were discussions and experience sharing for each of the visits. The young people found the programme an eye-opening opportunity -- not only did they capture a better understanding of the professions they aspired to, they also learned from their mentors about breaking stereotypes.



Mentors of "Career Challenge"

Ms Mabel CHEUNG, Film Director

The Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, Legislative Councillor

The Hon Rita FAN HSU Lai-tai, President, Legislative Council

Prof Stevenson FUNG, Professor, Department of Physics, The University of Hong Kong

The Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, Legislative Councillor

Mr Danny LAW, Department Operations Manager (Senior Nursing Officer), Accident and Emergency Department, Queen Mary Hospital

Ms Jacqueline LAW, Artiste

Dr LO Chi-kin, Public Affairs Consultant

Mr Warren MOK, Opera Singer and Artistic Director of the Macau International Music Festival

Mr Willy TSAO, Artistic Director, City Contemporary Dance Company

Ms YIP Wing-sie, Music Director, Hong Kong Sinfonietta

What is stereotyping?

Stereotyping is making assumption that certain groups should play certain fixed roles in society. Stereotypes pigeonhole individuals into fixed roles and behaviours, based on factors such as gender, disability and family status, which deny individual aspirations. Such assumptions or discrimination limit career and life choices for young people, restricting them from realizing their full potential. Sterotyping leads to discrimination, so we should be aware of the cost of stereotypes to individuals, the economy and our society.

Words from the Mentees

"Professor Fung has become my role model. He has shown us that we must not discriminate against people with a disability."

I could never have imagined that a person with a visual impairment could do so many things. Professor Fung not only completed a doctorate program on his own, he is now teaching at a top university in Hong Kong. We all watched in utter astonishment as he used a computer! With the aid of assistive devices, a person with a visual impairment can work on the computer just like any other person. What is even more amazing is that he can also write on the blackboard, distribute notes and give lectures! We would not have noticed his disability if we were not aware of it. Professor Fung has become my role model and idol. He has shown us that we must not discriminate against people with a disability. We should provide them with equal opportunities in employment and education. That is the only way to show that Hong Kong is a truly civilized society.



"But Mok's spirit of never giving up has enabled him to achieve breakthroughs and brought him great success...Now I believe I can do it if I tried hard enough."

Mr. Warren Mok has worked very hard to become a world-renowned soloist tenor. First he set a clear goal, then he strived for it. It was an arduous task and he had to overcome many difficulties. As an Asian, he faced racial discrimination when he worked with some westerners. But Mok's spirit of never giving up has enabled him to achieve breakthroughs and brought him great success. In the past, I thought it was impossible to go beyond one's capabilities. But now I believe I can do it if I tried hard enough.



"Not everyone is treated equally because discrimination exists in our society."

Before the visit I had no idea of what "stereotyping" meant. Neither did I take it seriously when I had to choose a mentor. I chose Ms. Jacqueline Law simply because she was an artiste and was more famous. Only after the visit did I realize that I was lucky to have her as my mentor. This is because I have learned a lot from her, things that are not found in books. Most impressive of all was hearing her talk about her hearing impairment after the accident. Instead of blaming and lamenting about fate, she faced it positively. As she said, "We cannot change reality no matter how much we grumbled. So we'd better be grateful and treasure what we have!"

Through this visit, I have come to understanding that there are two kinds of "stereotyping", sex stereotyping and disability stereotyping. Not everyone is treated equally because discrimination exists in our society. In the days to come, I hope that we can join hands in eliminating "stereotyping", and act on it.

"There are no limits in the world of dance...this is what life is all about..."

Willy Tsao has the gift of the gab. Whenever we raised a question, he would always offer his best response. This meant sometimes he would be serious, at other times we were enraptured by his great sense of humour as he recounted his anecdotes. His every move seems full of energy, I guess that's because of his love for dance. In those early years, even though there were many who spoke against his founding of a dance company, he remained steadfast in his belief.



This visit convinced me never to hold any preconceived attitudes about any one. There are no limits in the world of dance. The role of the choreographer is to enlighten, different dancers may have different feelings, the crux is to use movement to interpret those feelings. And this is what life is all about, that there should not be any limitations, nor should stereotyping exist. If only we are able to breakthrough these barriers and find our own directions, then we will be able to fulfill our potential!

For more activity photos and sharing by the mentees, please visit <http://www.eoc.org.hk/>

社區活動巡禮

events calendar

「新新好男人— 由暴力至溝通之旅」研討會

"New Generation of Men –
Pathway from Violence to
Communication" Seminar

04/01/2003 (14:30-17:00)

和諧之家—新家庭社區教育及資源中心

Harmony House—Community Education &
Resource Centre

www.harmonyhousehk.org

2342 0072 (譚小姐 Miss Tam)

《消除對婦女一切形式歧視公約》 網上資源中心

"Knowing More About CEDAW"
On-line Information Centre

www.eoc.org.hk/CC/cedaw/index.htm

www.eoc.org.hk/CE/cedaw/index.htm

平等機會委員會

Equal Opportunities Commission

2106 2202 (林小姐 Miss Lam)

「傷健共聚樂繽紛」綜合活動 "Integration and Inclusion" Variety Show

01/03/2003 (12:00-17:00)

協康會陳宗漢紀念中心

Heep Hong Society Chan Chung Hon Centre

2178 2885 (張先生 Mr Chan
/ 梁姑娘 Ms Leung)

「傷健平等推廣日」

"Equality For All"
Promotion Day

25/01/2003 (13:00-17:00)

香港青年學院 / 香港傷殘青年協會

Hong Kong Youth Institute & Hong Kong
Federation of Handicapped Youth

www.hkyi.org.hk

www.hkfh.org.hk

2368 3617 (王先生 Mr Wong)

《家庭崗位工作坊》

"Workshop on Family Status"

25/01/2003

香港離島婦女聯會賽馬會婦女綜合服務
中心

Hong Kong Outlying Islands Women's
Association LTD

3141 7110 (黃小姐 Miss Wong)

「半邊天」社區展覽 "Women's Issues" Exhibition

02/2003-03/2003

荃灣明愛社區中心

Caritas Community Centre—
Tsuen Wan

www.caritas.org.hk

2493 9156 (原女士 Ms Yuen)

婦女才能繽紛Show Women's Talent Show

03/2003

香港婦女中心協會

Hong Kong Federation of Women's Centres

www.womencentre.org.hk/main_acti.html

2386 6256

「全城效應」無障礙 城市推廣計劃

City Action –

Barrier-Free City Promotion
Scheme

05/01/2003 (11:00-15:00)

12/01/2003 (11:00-15:00)

19/01/2003 (11:00-15:00)

香港傷健協會港島東傷健中心

Hong Kong PHAB Association Hong
Kong Island East PHAB Centre

www.hkphab.org.hk

2557 1631 (譚小姐 Miss Tam)

「香港女性角色的演變」專題展覽

"Hong Kong Women Identity –
A Historical Survey" Thematic Exhibition

27/11/2002 - 12/05/2003

香港文化博物館

Hong Kong Heritage Museum

www.heritagemuseum.gov.hk

2180 8260 (陳先生 Mr Chan)

A Family's Fight Against Leukaemia



A family's fight against Leukaemia



People with chronic illnesses have to be strong and brave to endure various forms of medical treatment. Care from family members, support from friends and encouragement from others motivate them on their road to recovery. 14-year-old Sonic is a good example. He is a member of the "Little Life Warrior Society" * and has suffered from leukaemia. Recently, he and his family attended the opening ceremony of the Equal Opportunities Expo 2002, and they have this to share with EO News:

EOC News: How did you find out that Sonic had Leukaemia?

Mrs Fung: One night in 1993, after returning home from work, I noticed that Sonic, my 5-year-old son had a swelling the size of an egg above his collarbone. He had acute pain in his joints. We immediately took him to the Accident and Emergency Department. After one month of tests, the doctor confirmed that Sonic had leukaemia.

EOC News: How did leukaemia affect your everyday life and school studies?

Sonic: I needed to undergo a series of treatments, including drugs and chemotherapy. These treatments caused hair loss and made my body swell up. When the teachers learnt about my illness, they encouraged me to keep on studying and made some special arrangements for me. For example, I was allowed to be late for school if I didn't feel well in the morning. I was also allowed to sit down during morning assembly, while other students had to stand up. If I couldn't manage it I could go directly to the classroom. Besides, my teachers encouraged me to take part in an inter-school speech festival. They were not concerned that my poor health condition might affect the school's performance. I did not let them down. I won a prize in the competition. I am truly grateful for being accepted by the school, the teachers and my schoolmates.

EOC News: How did your family support Sonic when he was sick?

Mr Fung: Everyone in the family supported Sonic. My wife quit her job in order to look after him. While as the sole income earner, I could only take care of him when I was not at work. Sonic's grandfather and grandmother took care of our daughter, Lilian, who was only 1-year-old at the time, so that we could pay full attention to Sonic.

EOC News: Mrs. Fung, you were still working when Sonic fell ill. What was your employer's attitude?

Mrs Fung: When my supervisor knew that my son was seriously ill, he immediately asked me to go to the hospital to take care of my son. As Sonic's condition worsened, I decided to quit my job. My employer waived the requirement of a 3-month notice period or payment in lieu. He also allowed me to hand over my duties to my successor over the phone. He was indeed an understanding employer.



EOC News: When your brother was ill, did you support him in fighting against the disease?

Lilian: I was very little when my brother fell ill. I didn't know much about what was happening. I just knew that I should try my best to help my brother, who was very weak at the time. For example, I would pass him a basin when he was about to throw up. I would also pat his back gently to make him more comfortable. I would switch on the television for him when he wanted to watch TV. I understood the hardships my brother was going through and I wanted to make him more comfortable.

EOC News: Nowadays, there are about 900,000 people with chronic illnesses in Hong Kong. How would you encourage them to overcome their difficulties?



Mr Fung: It is inevitable that people with chronic illnesses would become more or less a burden to his family and friends. However, I hope that family and friends of chronically ill people would accept and learn more about their illnesses. They can help patients to face their adversities with a positive attitude and eventually they will be able to claim victory over their illnesses.

Mrs Fung: Life is not a bed of roses. We all have ups and downs in our lives, only the timing of our good times and bad times are different. I hope that family and friends of people with chronic illnesses would support and understand them.

Sonic: Never hide from your adversities and never give up. When something bad happens, we should look at it with a positive attitude.

***Little Life Warrior Society was established in the beginning of 2002 with the aim of fostering public concern and better understanding of childhood cancer. Its members are mainly medical personnel from Lady Pao Children's Cancer Centre, the Prince of Wales Hospital, patients and their parents.**

Sex Discrimination Case - This Job is Not for Men?

Sex Discrimination Case



This Job is Not for Men?



The complaint

Brenda was told by her friend Maggie that a health product company was hiring staff to distribute promotional leaflets. Maggie, who had worked for this company, told her the job was open to people over 16. It just happened that Brenda's younger brother David, aged 16, and his friend Johnny, aged 17, were looking for a summer job. Without thinking twice, the two friends, accompanied by Brenda, approached the company for an interview.

When they arrived at the office, Brenda asked an employee there if they were hiring someone to distribute leaflets. The man replied with a gentle smile, "Yes, are you interested?" She immediately pointed to David and Johnny behind her indicating that they wanted to apply. The man, with an abrupt change in his attitude, bluntly replied, "This job is not for men."

Disappointed, the three left the office wondering why men could not meet the job requirement of distributing leaflets. They became furious when they later found out from Maggie that the company used to have male employees distributing leaflets.

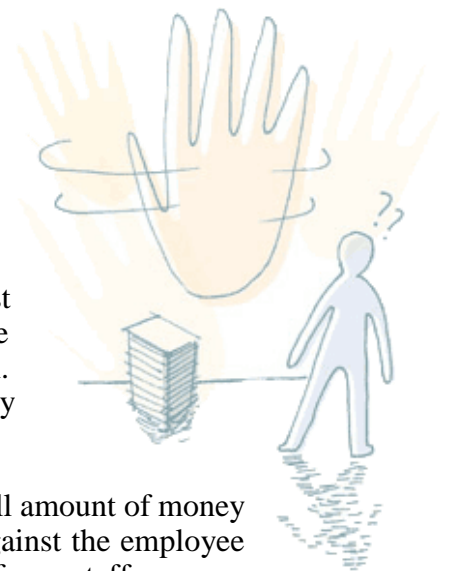
What the EOC did

Brenda filed a complaint with the Equal Opportunities Commission on behalf of her brother. She alleged the health product company discriminated against her brother as they rejected his job application on the ground of his sex. The Commission approached the company and explained to them the allegation. Before proceeding to investigation, the two parties agreed to settle the case by way of early conciliation.

The employer agreed to issue a letter of apology to David and pay him a small amount of money as compensation. The company also promised to take disciplinary action against the employee concerned and review the recruitment policy so as to enforce fair selection of new staff.

What the law says

The Sex Discrimination Ordinance applies equally to men and women. It is unlawful to discriminate a man by not offering him employment. Employers should make all recruitment decisions on the basis of consistent selection criteria and employees handling applications and conducting interviews should be trained to avoid acts of discrimination. Sex discrimination by an employer in recruiting for a job is not unlawful only when a person's sex is a genuine occupational qualification (GOQ) for the job. In the above case, since the essential nature of the job of distributing leaflets does not call for a specific sex, the use of GOQ as the reason for claiming exception is not valid.



Disability Discrimination Case - Don't Eat Here!

Disability Discrimination Case



Don't Eat Here!

The complaint

12 year-old Kenny is a child with an intellectual disability and he is also autistic. One evening Kenny's mother took him out to have dinner with her friends in a Chinese restaurant. Once inside, Kenny was so excited he yelled a few times. Their home assistant pacified him immediately and Kenny's mother also asked Kenny to keep quiet.

Towards the end of the meal, the restaurant manager went over to them and said that Kenny was causing a nuisance to the other customers. Kenny's mother explained to the manager about her son's behaviour and offered to apologize and explain to the customers who were making the complaint. Yet the manager refused, and said he would not let her disturb the customers. Waving a finger he added that the restaurant did not welcome the boy. Angry and disappointed, Kenny's mother decided to lodge a complaint with the EOC.



What the EOC did

Upon receipt of the complaint, the EOC contacted the restaurant management and carried out investigations. Both the senior manager of the restaurant group and the restaurant manager denied having a discriminatory policy against persons with intellectual disabilities. The restaurant manager, however, admitted that he was not tactful and had unintentionally upset the complainant.

Early conciliation was reached. In accordance with the complainant's wish which was not for personal compensation, the restaurant group agreed to donate a sum of money to a voluntary organization promoting the well being of children with disabilities, and sent representatives to help out on a flag day.

What the law says

Equal opportunities legislation covers provision of goods, facilities and services as well as many other areas of public life. Provision of services applies to retailers, hotels, guesthouses, restaurants and bars among others. Under the Disability Discrimination Ordinance, it is unlawful for a restaurant manager to refuse to serve a customer because he or she is a person with a disability unless the provision of this service would cause unjustifiable hardship.



Around the World

Around the World



British Telecom for Greater Access

British Telecom has introduced a telephone service to enable people with hearing or speech disabilities to use a standard telephone. The BT TextDirect service allows any person using a textphone -- a telephone with a keyboard and screen -- to make direct dial calls. The textphone user types the conversation on the textphone while an operator reads it aloud. The receiver then responds verbally and the operator types what is said so that the hearing impaired can read the conversation on the display panel. BT TextDirect will benefit 7.5 million people with hearing or speech impairments in the UK.

More Information:

<http://www.royaldeaf.org.uk/btpay.htm/>



Milestone for the Hearing Impaired

In Hong Kong, subtitles will become mandatory on prime-time television programmes as part of the two terrestrial TV broadcasters' obligation to improve access rights for the hearing impaired community. By December 2003, subtitles will appear on both TVB Jade and ATV Home, the two Cantonese channels, during news, weather, current affairs shows, emergency announcements and all prime-time shows. English subtitles will appear a year later on news and current affairs programmes on TVB Pearl and ATV World, the two English Channels.

The provision of subtitles is also a valuable educational tool for a significant number of people learning Chinese and English as a second language in Hong Kong.

More Information:

<http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/200211/12/1112201.htm>



Switch-off Stereotyping

In the United States, the National Organization for Women (NOW) Foundation launched the “Watch Out, Listen Up!” Campaign to promote positive and diverse portrayals of women, girls, people of color and other under-represented groups on television. NOW conducted a survey on entertainment programmes broadcast by six networks and the findings revealed that there was inequality between regularly employed female and male actors, also an overwhelming male point-of-view and a lack of social responsibility. The conclusion showed that television remained very much a man’s world, with women serving primarily as ‘eye candy’. To rectify the situation, NOW encourages the public to tell the media how they feel in order to hold the networks accountable. They urge the networks to stop distorting and presenting stereotypical images of women, girls and other under-represented groups to TV viewers.

More Information:

<http://www.now.org/press/10-02/10-28.html>



New Braille Conversion Software

In Argentina, four students have developed a software system that allows one to write text in different languages, print them, and convert it to Braille as part of an educational project. It recognizes Spanish, French and English and also allows for translation of pages on the Internet. The project allows students to learn the creation process as well as to develop a social service available for use. The students who created it intend to develop their project further in the future by adding a voice recognition component. Although this is not the first invention of its kind, a similar software package is available in Holland, but at a much higher cost.

More Information:

http://www.disabilityworld.org/09-10_02/access/software.shtml

EO Reaches the Community

EO Reaches the Community

Equal Opportunities Expo 2002

Kicks off with a theme "Put Prejudice Away"

The theme of this year's Expo "Put Prejudice Away" focuses on promoting acceptance of persons with chronic illnesses, HIV/AIDS or mental illnesses. The Expo is the Commission's annual event held in November/December to promote equal opportunities for everyone. More than 20 organizations have come on board to organize workshops, exhibitions, variety shows, carnivals and fun competitions.



EOC Chairperson Ms Anna WU (from right) officiated at the launch with Mr. Frankie LUI, District Officer of the Tai Po District; Mr. CHEUNG Hok-ming, Chairman of the Tai Po District Council; the Hon. Andrew WONG Wang-fat and the Hon. Andrew CHENG Kar-foo, Legislative Councilors; Ms Atty CHING, Vice-Chairman of the Hong Kong Coalition of AIDS Service Organizations; and Mr. NG Hang-sau, Chief Service Supervisor of the Hong Kong Society for Rehabilitation Community Rehabilitation Network.



The Hon Andrew WONG Wang-fat (center) joined other speakers in presenting their views on effective ways of fighting discrimination.

The Hon. Andrew CHENG Kar-foo (left) was all ears when Sonic Fung (front centre) recounted his story of fighting leukemia at the tender age of five



All participating guests at the Opening Ceremony, including officiating guests, persons with chronic illnesses and their relatives, performers, social workers, health experts and volunteers.

