

MINISTER FOR EDUCATION OUTLINES MOE'S PRIORITIES FOR SCHOOLS AND UNVEILS MORE HELP FOR NEEDY STUDENTS

Enhancements to Edusave Scheme and School-based Financial Assistance

1. Dr Ng Eng Hen, Minister for Education and Second Minister for Defence, outlined the priorities of the Ministry of Education (MOE) in the school sector over the next few years. As part of the move to provide educational opportunities for all, he also announced enhanced financial support for students through the Edusave scheme and school-based financial assistance schemes.

2. MOE's key priorities in the school sector over the next few years¹ are:

- a. Holistic education, to develop future-ready young Singaporeans.
- b. Educational opportunities for all, regardless of financial situation, so that education remains an important social leveler.

HOLISTIC EDUCATION, TO DEVELOP FUTURE-READY YOUNG SINGAPOREANS

3. An all-rounded education will prepare our children with the necessary mindsets, values and skills to thrive in the 21st century. In particular, MOE will strengthen the development of soft skills, starting with primary education.

4. The recommendations of the PERI Committee to improve primary education have been well-received. MOE will implement the changes to primary education progressively over the next few years as many of the recommendations require systematic implementation over the medium to long term. Ms Grace Fu, Senior Minister of State, will help to oversee the implementation of the recommendations. MOE will work closely with parents and the community, and support schools and teachers.

5. With these changes in primary schools to be implemented over time, MOE believes that it is timely to review how we can similarly enhance opportunities for a holistic education at the secondary level.

6. MOE will also study how it can build on recent enhancements to better customise secondary education, in terms of curriculum offerings and approaches to students with different learning styles and needs. Recent enhancements in the secondary sector, like

¹ MOE's plans for the tertiary education sector were released on 19 May 2009. SMS S Iswaran will help oversee the development of the Singapore Institute of Applied Technology.

the introduction of new options and pathways for Normal course students, have shown encouraging signs. For example, teachers from the three N(T) Mark II schools² observe greater engagement and motivation levels amongst their students.

² Bedok Town Secondary, Shuqun Secondary and Si Ling Secondary

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL

More excellent schools – enhanced support for autonomous schools

7. In the last few years, MOE has expanded opportunities through new types of schools (e.g., School of Science and Technology will open next year), new programmes, new pathways to cater to the different aptitudes, interests and learning styles of our students.

8. To grow more excellent schools, MOE will increase the support provided to Autonomous Schools from June 2009 (see Annex A for list of Autonomous Schools). This will enable the schools to provide more and higher-quality student-focused programmes which will nurture the strengths and talents of their pupils and further stretch their potential. In terms of resources, Autonomous Schools currently receive additional funding of about \$150 per student per year over and above the usual annual school operating budget. MOE will increase the funding to \$300 per student. From 2010, Autonomous Schools will also receive additional funding to explore new pedagogical approaches to improve teaching and learning as well as to develop stronger programmes in the area of student leadership.

Support for weaker students

9. MOE has also enhanced provisions for weaker students and those from disadvantaged backgrounds – Learning Support Programmes for literacy and numeracy at the lower primary level, NorthLight School and Assumption Pathway School, support for N(T) Mark II schools to introduce more engaging teaching methods.

10. One particular concern is attrition. While attrition is low (0.2 percent at primary level and 0.8 percent at secondary level, while another 0.5 percent drop out in between), MOE's goal is for every Singaporean to benefit from our education system. Mr Masagos Zulkifli, Senior Parliamentary Secretary, chairs the Committee for Monitoring Attrition in MOE to help formulate strategies and programmes to engage students, support schools with greater need, and work with community organisations.

Enhanced Financial Support

11. In view of the economic downturn, MOE will spend an additional \$67.5 mil to ensure that no child will be denied a quality education because of financial difficulties. This involves enhancing the Edusave Scheme (\$65.9 mil) and a top-up of the discretionary funding for school-based schemes to assist needy students (\$1.6 mil).

Edusave

12. The Edusave Scheme was started by the Government in 1993 to maximise educational opportunities for Singaporeans. The Edusave Scheme comprises three key components:

- a. Edusave Pupils Fund (EPF) - The Government makes yearly contributions into the Edusave accounts for all Singaporean students studying in mainstream schools and government-funded SPED schools. Pupils can tap on these funds to participate in enrichment activities and learning experiences, where they can pursue their interests and develop their strengths;
- b. Edusave Grants (EG) – Annual grants are given to Government and Government-aided schools and junior colleges/centralised institute, independent schools and junior colleges, Institute of Technical Education and special education schools. Schools and institutions can use the grants to procure resources and equipment, and conduct programmes to enhance the quality of teaching and learning; and
- c. Edusave Awards (EA) - Awards are given to Singaporean students who have performed well or made good progress in their school work, or have obtained achievements in non-academic activities.

13. For 2009, MOE will increase Edusave funding by a total of \$65.9 million to enable students to continue to participate in meaningful enrichment programmes even during these difficult times:

- a. One-off top-up of \$80 to Edusave accounts of Singaporeans students (+\$45.6 mil):
In January 2009, the annual Edusave contribution rate was increased by \$20 (from \$180 to \$200 at primary level and from \$220 to \$240 at secondary level). To provide more assistance to pupils during the current economic downturn, MOE will make a one-off top-up of \$80 to the Edusave accounts of the primary and secondary students including those in special education schools. This additional top-up means that within 2009, each student will receive an additional \$100 in their Edusave accounts.
- b. One-off top-up to Edusave grants to schools (+\$11.8 mil):
MOE will also provide a one-off top-up of \$20 per student to the Edusave Grant (EG). The top-up to the EG will allow schools to sustain their enrichment programmes for their students. With the top-up, a primary school will see an average increase of \$22,800 (27%) while a secondary school will see an average increase of \$25,600 (22%).

c. Increase in quanta for Edusave awards (+\$8.5 mil):

To better recognise students for their achievements in both academic and non-academic areas, MOE will raise the quanta for Edusave Awards (comprising Edusave Scholarships, Edusave Merit Bursary, Good Progress Award and Edusave Awards for Achievement, Good Leadership and Service). For the awards given out from December 2009 onwards, MOE will be increasing the amounts for these awards by between \$30 and \$150. For instance, a Primary 2 or 3 student will receive \$100 for a Good Progress Award this year, up from \$50 previously. A secondary school student from a lower income family who has done well in his school will get an Edusave Merit Bursary of \$350, up from \$250.

Additional Funding For School-Based Financial Assistance (+\$1.6 mil)

14. In February 2009, MOE provided a one-time \$10,000 grant to all schools via their School Advisory Committees/School Management Committees and an additional \$10,000 top-up to schools which have more than 10 per cent of students under the MOE Financial Assistance Scheme (FAS). This grant was provided to ensure that all schools have sufficient funds for discretionary financial assistance to help students from families affected by the economic downturn.

15. This discretionary funding has been well-received by schools. To provide additional support, MOE will give an extra top-up of \$5,000 to schools that have used up 50% of the discretionary funding before February 2010. The estimated cost of providing this extra top-up to schools is \$1.6 million.

Other Funding Provisions

16. Besides the Edusave Scheme, MOE has several schemes which help provide students with educational opportunities. This includes MOE Financial Assistance Scheme, School Breakfast Programme, Opportunity Fund and Internationalisation Fund.

17. In January 2009, MOE announced the enhancement of the benefits under the MOE FAS so that students at the primary and secondary school levels now receive help to cover a wider range of school essentials. The bursary amount for JC students was also increased.

18. The Opportunity Fund continues to be another source for schools to tap on to provide additional help to their needy students by subsidising school-based enrichment opportunities.

19. The Internationalisation Fund is another source of funding to provide all students with an overseas immersion experience as an integral component of their schooling

20. Overall, MOE has a comprehensive suite of funding sources to help different groups of students in our schools. With the measures announced in January 2009

(\$23.4 mil) and in this press release (\$67.5 mil), MOE will be providing in total, approximately \$90 mil of additional financial support. Coupled with the very significant subsidies for school education and help from the community, Singaporean children will have every support to benefit from the opportunities offered by our schools.

Annex A

<u>LIST OF AUTONOMOUS SCHOOLS</u> Year School Became Autonomous	School
1994	Anderson Secondary School Bukit Panjang Government High CHIJ Secondary School (Toa Payoh) Dunman High School River Valley High School Victoria School
1995	Anglican High School Catholic High CHIJ St Nicholas Girls' School Commonwealth Secondary School Tanjong Katong Girls' School Temasek Secondary School
1996	Cedar Girls' Secondary School Chung Cheng High School (Main) Crescent Girls' School Fairfield Methodist Secondary School Maris Stella High School Zhonghua Secondary School
2001	Dunman Secondary School Xinmin Secondary School
2002	Paya Lebar Methodist Girls' Secondary School St Anthony's Canossian Secondary School
2003	CHIJ Katong Convent
2004	Ngee Ann Secondary School
2005	Tanjong Katong Secondary School
2006	Nan Hua High School
2009	St Margaret's Secondary School
2010	Yishun Town Secondary School