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To: Principals of All Primary and Secondary Schools

Dear Principals,

Thanks to the effort of everyone to overcome various difficulties, we see the gradual resumption of classes on primary and secondary campuses. This school year is indeed full of challenges. The beginning of the school year was distressed by the social incidents, and the second term was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. All schools had suspended their classes since early 2020, and only recently could classes be resumed gradually. Class resumption is a hard-earned achievement made by the concerted efforts of all parties. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all of you for offering unwavering care for your students, looking after their emotions, assisting them to learn at home, as well as maintaining close contact with their parents, in overcoming all sorts of problems.

In the past year, students have already lost a considerable amount of precious learning time and should treasure the opportunity of being able to return to school. However, it has once again come to our notice that recently, some groups are launching online joint signature campaigns to oppose the legislation of the national security law, intentionally misleading or even inciting students (especially primary and secondary school students) to take part in the so-called 'holding a strike or class boycott as a referendum'. Such acts are exploitations of students to achieve these groups' own political objectives at the expense of students' interests and prospects. The Government strongly condemns these people for hurting our students with such acts. I appeal to you to clearly explain to students that the national security law will only target four types of acts and activities that seriously jeopardise national security, namely secession, subversion, organising and carrying out terrorist activities as well as interference in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region's affairs by foreign and external



forces. The objective is to prevent, curb and sanction the actions of a very small number of law breakers threatening national security. The enactment of the legislation will also sustain the prosperity and stability of Hong Kong. It will not affect the legitimate rights and freedoms enjoyed by the vast majority of Hong Kong residents under the law, including freedom of speech, of the press, of assembly, of demonstration and of procession. The average Hong Kong residents should not and will not participate in acts or activities which undermine national security, and will not be affected by the national security law at all. We are obliged to guide students to make rational analysis and to distinguish right from wrong. We have to prevent students from being misguided by incomplete or misrepresented information, groundless allegations and misleading sayings disseminated by those holding an opposite view on the national security law. As a matter of fact, the Basic Law and Hong Kong's legal system do not provide for any 'referendum' mechanism. Any form of a so-called 'referendum' will have no constitutional basis or legal effect. Schools should not allow students to participate in any such meaningless 'referendum' activities, as well as any form of class boycotts.

I trust that teachers will continue to uphold their commitment, serve as role models and will not participate in class boycotts or teaching boycotts in any forms. In fact, teachers have an obligation to perform their duties. Any teachers taking part in class boycotts advocated by the aforementioned groups are not only deliberately failing to perform their jobs and neglecting their duties, but also purposefully bringing politics into schools. It is a demonstration to students of expression of political demands in breach of established rules. Such improper act will mislead students and is a violation of teachers' professional ethics. Schools should take disciplinary actions, and the Education Bureau (EDB) will follow up seriously. According to the Codes of Aid, the school management committee (SMC)/ incorporated management committees (IMC) of aided schools may grant leave with pay for a maximum of two days per school year to teachers on grounds of 'urgent private affairs of grave importance'. That said, class boycott activities are not regarded as 'urgent private affairs of grave importance'. Under no circumstances should teachers be entitled to take leave (including no-pay leave) for the purpose of class boycotts.

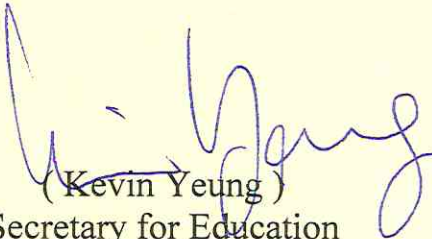
In addition, please remind students once again that they should always put their own safety as the top priority, be considerate to themselves and family members who care about them, and must not participate in dangerous or unlawful activities. They should not participate in class boycotts, or take part in activities such as chanting slogans, forming human chains, and posting slogans or singing songs which contain political messages at schools for expressing political stance. These actions will turn the schools into venues for expressing political demands,



compromise harmony on campuses, stir up other people's emotions and make them feel stressed, and ultimately undermine the progress of learning. The names of schools may even be "hijacked" by such activities, misleading people into believing that the political thoughts have originated from the schools or personnel therein. Schools should therefore adopt appropriate measures in response. If principals or teachers identify that there are students initiating, organising, joining or encouraging their fellows to participate in these activities, the teachers should immediately counsel the students to stop. Students should be reminded to cherish their peaceful and orderly campus lives and learning opportunities. If individual students refuse to comply with the instructions after repeated persuasion, schools should take appropriate counselling and disciplinary actions according to the school-based mechanism to maintain discipline and order. In providing guidance to students, the cooperation of parents is also very important. I appeal to all of you to maintain close communication with parents and join hands with them to help students distinguish right from wrong. This is to enable students to focus on learning and not be instigated by others. None of us wish to see students give up their studies for taking part in political activities or even have their future ruined because of participating in unlawful activities.

Once again, I wish to express my sincere gratitude to you and all teachers for your dedication to the healthy growth and development of students. In the past year, despite all the difficulties, all of you have upheld your commitment to nurture your students. The EDB will continue to join hands with you to protect students and prevent politics from getting into schools, and sustain a safe and stable learning environment for students.

Yours sincerely,



(Kevin Yeung)  
Secretary for Education