

# Towards Building an Educational and Assessment Accommodation Service Model for Children with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) and their Families

## 「家校同行」個別化學習支援計劃



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# **Towards Building an Educational and Assessment Accommodation Service Model for Children with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) and their Families**

## **Executive Summary**

Since the 1990s, there have been growing public awareness of the problems and needs of children with dyslexia in Hong Kong. However, helping dyslexics to achieve psychosocial and academic progress still presents significant challenges.

In 2003, the current research team recruited 18 dyslexic students from three primary schools and 22 dyslexic students from three secondary schools to join a 18-month study to evaluate the usefulness of a school-based educational and accommodation service model which used Individualized Educational Plans (IEP) to support dyslexic students, their parents, and their teachers. Principles of equal educational rights, the synergy of a home-school collaboration in ecosystems, and positive psychology were strategically applied in student-led individualized education. In addition, enrichment programs were established to encourage the dyslexics to try to achieve their self-designed goals and to enhance their learning motivation. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected to evaluate the project's impact on the case students, their parents and teachers. It is expected that the experience of setting up such a home-school cooperation prototype can help other schools to adopt the model so that they can better support students with special educational needs (SEN).

### *Project Objectives*

1. Establish a school-based support structure involving teachers, parents, and dyslexic students so that they can connect to and support each other.
2. Devise educational and assessment accommodations for dyslexic students so that they can benefit from equal educational opportunities.
3. Enhance the effectiveness of student learning through open communication with parents and teachers on study expectations, work plans, monitoring, and evaluation.
4. Promote the psychosocial functioning of the dyslexic students and their parents by connecting them to school resources and by increasing their understanding and acceptance of dyslexia.
5. Promote the teachers' knowledge, and improve their attitude and skills so that they can better support dyslexics and other students with special education needs.

### *Project Outcome*

1. A service model involving students, parents, and teachers was established in each of the participating schools. This model was recognized by all six schools as a good-basis for connecting existing and future resources to handle dyslexics and other students with special education needs. All the secondary schools asserted that they would try to provide continuous IEP support for the case students to monitor their progress until they graduate or leave school.
2. Educational and assessment accommodations were successfully negotiated for each case student. All teachers, parents, and students were better informed and more receptive to the idea that dyslexic students should be given educational and

assessment accommodations to ensure that the students have more equal educational opportunities. The project has also established a database on the popularity of different means of accommodations.

3. The parents and students reported significant improvement in their perception of the students' academic satisfaction. The students reported feeling a stronger sense of belonging to their schools. Many remarked that the teachers were genuinely concerned about and helpful to them. The IEP platform effectively promoted communication and bridged the expectation gap between the parties. The successful attainment of the more realistic educational goals enhanced the students' and parents' perceived satisfaction.
4. The findings demonstrated that after project implementation, there were positive changes in some psychosocial functioning of the students and their parents, especially in terms of their parent-child relationship, home-school communication, and the bridging of expectation gaps.
5. The teachers have shown evident improvement in acquiring a more positive attitude towards inclusive education for dyslexics. They have also gained more knowledge and skills about how to help dyslexic students and their families. Many have become more empathetic to these students and there is increased initiative to devise personalized measures to support individual students, especially where family support is weak. The teachers and parents were more appreciative of the children's willingness to do extra work, or to attend private tuition. The teachers showed guarded support of integrative education, and they indicated that diversity in the classroom must be kept within reasonable limits to ensure effective learning and teaching.

### *Conclusion*

1. The project has collected quantitative and qualitative evidence to demonstrate that launching individualized home-school educational and accommodation support for students with dyslexia is beneficial to the students, their parents, and school personnel.
2. The project asserts that the concepts of equality in educational opportunities, positive psychology, home-school collaboration, and individualized educational plans are useful principles that can be operationalized in the model to create a positive impact on the participants.
3. For the model to succeed in schools, the project highlights the importance of systematic planning, effective policy, and matching resources in terms of proper professional support at different junctures.
4. The project also demonstrates the importance and practicability of rigorous program evaluation in developing evidence-based interventions.