



**The Hong Kong Society of  
Child Neurology and Developmental Paediatrics**

香港兒童腦科及體智發展學會

To whom it may concern

17 September 2012

Re: Supporting the Continuation and Extension of the  
Sign Bilingualism & Co-enrolment Deaf Education (SLCO) Programme in Hong Kong

I would like to congratulate the vision and leadership the Centre for Sign Linguistics and Deaf Studies of the Chinese University of Hong Kong in developing the SLCO Programme for children with hearing impairment, and to write in support of its continuation at preschool/primary levels and extension to the secondary level.

As a consultant developmental paediatrician and member of the Management Committee of the Jockey Club Sign Bilingualism and Co-enrolment in Deaf Education (JC-SLCO) Programme, I was privileged to have witnessed the development of this paradigm-shifting inclusive, oral-sign bilingual education programme in Hong Kong. The Programme benefited not only children with hearing impairment linguistically and academically, but also nurtured a group of children, with and without hearing impairment, growing up together in learning and friendship, with a positive attitude towards sign language and deafness.

Development of brain connectivity for language acquisition takes place over the early months and years of a child's life. For this to occur successfully, effective language input from birth is essential. Although children with hearing impairment face serious deficiencies in accessing aural-oral language, sign language can provide the necessary language input, through which development of the language brain may continue to take place over this critical period. Children who later acquire varying degrees of hearing from assistive devices or cochlea implant will have a stronger language foundation upon which to develop oral language. For those who continue to have very limited hearing despite treatment measures, it will be an important support to not only language but cognitive development and learning.

In addition to the bilingual education programme, learning materials produced by the Programme have benefited children with hearing impairment and those with other special needs. The impact of this research is expected to be extended to the wider Chinese speaking and international community.

In sum, I strongly support the continuation of the Programme, such that the current positive impact can be consolidated and extended. I look forward to Professor Gladys Tang and her team receiving support from public and/or funding bodies to realize this very important mission, and to seeing a through-train model from baby signing to secondary education for children with hearing impairment in Hong Kong.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Catherine Lam

Vice President, Hong Kong Society of Child Neurology & Developmental Paediatrics