



16 November 2009

Dear parents,

We are now more than two months into the new academic year. After all those back-to-school hassles, parents have come to care more about the children's studies.

Parents are understandably concerned about their children's success in school. More importantly, it is incumbent upon us parents to help our children choose the right path for a healthy and meaningful life. Juvenile drug abuse has become serious in Hong Kong. This is worrying for the parents and the community. To combat the problem, the Government has geared up law enforcement actions to curb the supply of drugs. However, there are many other reasons behind the problem. We need to mobilize the whole community to help our young people stay away from drugs.

Prevention of drug abuse begins at home. In one of the many anti-drug activities over these months, I met a mother of a fairly well-off family. Feeling insufficient care but over-expectations from parents, her son lost himself to drugs under peer influence. The shocked, despairing mother suffered from temporary blindness after much painful crying, but she never gave up on her son. With the help of teachers and social workers, the prodigal son repented and got out of drugs eventually. This story tells us that better communication with our children is the most effective way to prevent juvenile drug abuse.

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Students using psychotropic substances show no obvious symptoms in the early stages and may go unnoticed for several years. By the time the problem surfaces, their bodies and minds will have suffered unrepairable harm. To tackle the problem of hidden drug abuse, the Government and secondary schools in Tai Po District will implement the "Trial Scheme on School Drug Testing" in December this year. Later today we will issue the protocol of the scheme and consent letters to parents and students in Tai Po. The only aim of this voluntary scheme is to help students resist the temptation of drugs, nipping the problem in the bud and creating a "Say NO to drugs!" culture on campuses. With regard to those who have become addicted, we hope they will soon be found and encouraged to seek help to get back on the right path.

Youngsters who have come clean of drugs told me it was love and support from family, friends, teachers and social workers that did the trick. I am confident that, working together, we will conquer drug abuse and our youngsters will lead a rewarding life.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Donald Tsang", with a horizontal line underneath it.

(Donald Tsang)
Chief Executive