

Transport subsidies for schools in non-mountainous and non-urban regions

Closing the divide between urban and rural schools

(text/ by Hsia Feng-Ssu, Division of Academic Senior High Education)

In order to close the divide between urban and rural schools and ease the commute of students in remote areas, the K-12 Education Administration (K12EA) has been providing transport subsidies for senior high school students since Academic Year 2018/2019. In 2020, the Ministry of Education has expanded the subsidy program to include even more schools. Specifically, senior high schools classified as being in areas that are "neither mountainous nor urban" can also benefit from the subsidy program now. Even though these schools are not classified as schools in remote areas, transport to these areas still present challenges, so the subsidy program would alleviate some of the challenges facing students in these schools.

K12EA pointed out that schools in non-mountainous and non-urban areas, like schools in remote areas, are inaccessible. Students traveling to these schools face high transportation costs and long traveling time, which would, in turn, have a great impact on their schooling life. After multiple rounds of discussions and collation of the viewpoints of various stakeholders, K12EA decided to expand the subsidy program to make students from senior high schools in non-mountainous and non-urban areas eligible for the program as well.

The transport subsidy for senior high school students in remote areas assists them with expenses on their day-to-day commuting, as well as the two-way expenses incurred when the students return to their hometown. In Academic Years 2018/2019 and 2019/2020, about 4,400 students from 16 schools benefitted from the program. After the program was expanded in Academic Year 2020/2021 to include students from senior high schools in non-mountainous and non-urban areas, applications from 34 schools were approved, and it is projected that 7,200 students will receive the subsidy.

K12EA stated that closing the divide between the educational resources of urban and rural schools can reduce the disparity between the students of different schools. The pursuit of equal education opportunities for all is a policy outcome that the ministry will continuously push for. The transport subsidy can reduce the financial burden of students and their parents and ease the education journey taken by these children. K12EA will continue to revise and update the subsidy program to better meet the needs of schools in remote areas, so as to allow every student to enjoy their schooling life with peace of mind.