Foreword

Ever since whole day primary schooling was launched, many students have been staying in schools for lunch on each school day. However, we have learnt from experience that schools and parents may overlook the nutritional quality of lunch foods from suppliers and look at instead the suppliers' scale of operation, performance record, the impression from plant visits, and results of tasting sessions and prices. Without proper considerations, the result is: at school, our kids eat nutritionally inferior lunch foods with high content of oil, salt and sugar. As time goes by, their unhealthy eating pattern is reinforced, leading to a higher risk of non-communicable diseases like diabetes and heart disease in their adulthood. For their better health and happy learning experience, we should act promptly against this trend and make long-term plans for the health and future of students.

As consumers, parents of course wish to see that the schools give their children lunch foods that are delicious, healthy and meanwhile affordable. They may not realise that this will depend not only on the schools but also the lunch suppliers, and the selection of a capable one. No matter you are school staff or parents, you should understand that preparing healthy lunch food for students is not an easy task, and that the process of selecting a capable lunch supplier involves a large amount of administrative duties for teachers to ensure that the whole process takes place under open, fair and just terms. Moreover, the selection should take into consideration a wide spectrum of views from parents and students, so that the quality of the final products reflects what they ask for.

It is the recommendation of the Department of Health (DH) that when school staff and parents choose lunch suppliers, they should consider not only factors like food hygiene, suppliers' operation details and prices, but also whether the suppliers concerned are able to supply lunch food with nutritional value. At the same time, the Monitoring Committees on Catering Affairs (MCCA) in schools and responsible teachers should spare no effort to uphold the principles of openness, fairness and justice that govern the whole tendering and selection process.

Ever since the "EatSmart@school.hk" Campaign was launched, DH has produced a series of reference materials in collaboration with the Education Bureau and other stakeholders, and later compiled them into a handbook for schools and parents who need substantial assistance when choosing their lunch suppliers. This current version is revised in September 2019 to incorporate the latest comments as collected by DH from schools and school lunch suppliers. Apart from DH, the Education Bureau (EDB), the Environmental Protection Department (EPD), the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD), the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) and the Innovation and Technology Commission (ITC) may also revise their notices and guidelines from time to time, so schools should also note the most updated information from these bodies when choosing their lunch suppliers. Schools are welcome to take reference from the proposed flow charts and templates in this handbook, formulate their internal guidelines of lunch supplier selection, and practise healthy eating in schools.