PRESS RELEASE

Civic Exchange Calls for Environmental Education That Connects Knowledge with Action

Hong Kong, 10 September 2026 – Civic Exchange today released *From Knowledge to Action: Education for Hong Kong's Green Transformation*, a new report calling for a more connected and applied approach to environmental education. It finds that environmental content is already embedded across Hong Kong's junior secondary curriculum, but connections across subjects and opportunities to apply learning are not consistently reinforced.

The report was launched at a satellite event of Hong Kong Green Week 2026, featuring a keynote address by Professor Debra Roberts, Core Team Member of UNEP's Overshoot Report, Former Co-Chair of IPCC Working Group II (2015–2023), and Coordinating Lead Author of the IPCC Special Report on Climate Change and Cities.

Professor Roberts warned that, at current rates, human-induced warming will reach 1.5°C around 2030. Bringing temperatures back down by the end of the century will require immediate and deep emissions reductions, alongside the removal of greenhouse gases already emitted. The higher and longer the overshoot, the greater the risks to people and ecosystems and the harder adaptation becomes.

'Education has an essential role in building that capacity,' Professor Roberts said. 'It is only by educating ourselves about the challenges that we can turn from bystanders into champions for change.'

Drawing on curriculum mapping, teacher and stakeholder engagement, school visits, a survey of 156 secondary students, and local and international case studies, the report identifies a knowledge-to-action gap. Environmental knowledge and positive attitudes do not consistently translate into confidence or opportunities to act.

Only 16% of surveyed students rated their preparedness to respond to future climate-related challenges at eight or above out of ten. Meanwhile, 51% identified hands-on activities as the most effective way to learn.

'Hong Kong does not primarily need more environmental curriculum content. It needs stronger connections between what students know, the responsibilities they recognise and the actions they are equipped to take,' said Ms Kitty Tam, Programme Lead at Civic Exchange. 'Climate overshoot means that today's students will spend much of their adult lives navigating growing risks and difficult trade-offs. Education must equip them to connect knowledge with judgement and action.'

The report proposes three priorities: strengthening curriculum integration across subjects; providing continuous, curriculum-linked experiential learning; and strengthening practical support for teachers and schools.

Teachers and environmental educators highlighted the value of field-based and project-based learning, interactive workshops and engagement with real-world environmental challenges. However, they also identified limited curriculum time, insufficient practical resources and a need for stronger implementation support. 'There is a need for more practical professional development, curriculum-aligned resources and sustained partnerships among schools, universities, environmental organisations and practitioners.' said Ms Peggy Cheung, Assistant Manager, Community Empowerment of Civic Exchange.

To demonstrate how the three priorities can work together, the report presents school-based Nature-based Solutions as a practical whole-school application. Campuses can become living laboratories where students investigate challenges such as heat, rainfall or biodiversity loss, apply knowledge from different subjects and monitor whether their responses work.

Government can recognise environmental education as a cross-cutting priority in Hong Kong's first Five-Year Plan for 2026–2030. This would connect the enhancement of basic education with ecological civilisation, green transformation, climate resilience and emerging green career pathways. The success of environmental education should be judged not only by what students know, but by what they are equipped and empowered to do.

Full Report and Press Materials available at this link or QR code below:

About Civic Exchange
Civic Exchange is an independent public policy think tank with a vision to shape a liveable and sustainable Hong Kong. Our mission is to engage society and influence public policy through research, dialogue, and the development of practical solutions. Civic Exchange has been ranked among the top 50 environment policy think tanks in the world by the University of Pennsylvania since 2011. To know more, please visit: https://civic-exchange.org/

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