Almost half of Hong Kong by-election hopefuls in favour of scrapping contentious BCA test

Concern group Parents United of Hong Kong surveyed the 15 candidates on their views about the Basic Competency Assessments

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Almost half of the candidates in Hong Kong’s upcoming Legislative Council by-election are in favour of scrapping a controversial assessment for Primary Three pupils, according to a parents’ alliance which is fighting to do away with the tests.

Bottom of Form

Seven hopefuls supported calls to abolish the Basic Competency Assessments (BCA) when the 15 candidates where asked by email about their stance, concern group Parents United of Hong Kong said on Friday.

Group spokeswoman Annie Cheung Yim-shuen said it was a good time to reveal where the candidates stood on the tests to draw public attention to the alliance’s campaign before Sunday’s [by-election](http://www.scmp.com/topics/legislative-council-election-2018). The by-election is being held to fill four of six seats vacated by pro-democracy lawmakers who were ousted last year over improper oath-taking.

Those in favour of scrapping the tests are Gary Fan Kwok-wai, Au Nok-hin, Edward Yiu Chung-yim, Paul Zimmerman, Judy Chan Ka-pui, Christine Fong Kwok-shan and Joyce Chiu Pui-yuk.

Zimmerman said he would support a replacement for the BCA that “does not involve exams for young children”. The BCA has long been contentious among parents and educators for the pressure it put on children.

It is widely regarded as a rebranded version of the Primary Three Territory-wide System Assessment – which gauged pupils’ English, Chinese and maths standards and was notoriously associated with teachers drilling pupils amid a widespread belief that the bureau used data to rank schools.

The alliance also called on Chief Executive [Carrie Lam](http://www.scmp.com/topics/carrie-lam) Cheng Yuet-ngor to honour her election pledge to abolish the tests. Lam has said the assessment may not be abolished if society accepts it.

Secretary for Education Kevin Yeung Yun-hung said on Friday that his bureau would make a decision before the end of March on whether to hold the BCA exam this year, as it was still waiting for recommendations from a coordinating committee. “After we receive their recommendation, the government will make a decision as soon as possible,” Yeung said.The assessment is scheduled for May and June.

The alliance said the government should stop “manipulating words” and fulfil Lam’s election campaign promise of last year. “If the government won’t stop testing Primary Three pupils, we parents will fight them,” Cheung, the mother of a Primary Five pupil, told the Post.

“My child transferred to international school in the second term of Primary Three, because the pressure from BCA tests in public school was too much to bear.”

International schools in Hong Kong are not required to take part in the assessments.

The alliance also took aim at Financial Secretary [Paul Chan](http://www.scmp.com/topics/paul-chan) Mo-po’s [budget](http://www.scmp.com/topics/hong-kong-budget-2018-2019) for subsidising struggling Ocean Park by giving 10,000 free tickets to pupils rather than spending the money on important education issues.