DEVELOPING SELF-DIRECTED WRITERS THROUGH ADOPTING ASSESSMENT AS LEARNING PRACTICES

~ HOLY FAMILY CANOSSIAN SCHOOL (KOWLOON TONG)~

Concerns

- Students' performance in writing is comparatively weaker than that of other skills

- Writing tasks can be refined for the explicit teaching of writing skills

- The assessment of the writing could be planned better to help students develop into reflective learners → promote assessement as learning

Self-directed Learning

- Key characteristics:
  - Learners' **control** and **self-management**
  - Personal **autonomy in context**
  - Tendency of **self-learning** (e.g. independent pursuit of learning outside school)
  - Learners' **reflection**

Source: Glossary, Basic Education Curriculum Guide (Primary 1-6)

Modes of Assessment

Mode of Assessment	Description
Under "Assessment as Learning", students should *understand their learning targets, monitor their learning progress, reflect on what to learn and the learning strategies to adopt based on feedback, adjust their learning methods and future learning targets, or even plan for their future direction of learning*. In the long run, students should become their own best assessor and provide feedback for their own learning. (Basic Education Curriculum Guide (Primary 1-6))	

Source: Chapter 5 Assessment, Basic Education Curriculum Guide (Primary 1-6)

The project

Level: P6

Target skill: Writing

No. of students: 125

Different measures to enhance assessment literacy

Strategies applied:

1. **Use data effectively** to inform planning

2. **Review and refine** the design of the writing tasks

3. Improve the teaching of writing – promote **SDL** & **e-learning** in writing lessons

Improving the teaching of writing & assessment literacy

4. Vary the *modes of assessment* in writing

5. Provide *quality feedback* for improving writing

6. Promote **assessment as learning**

7. Add **variety to homework** to promote self-directed learning

Strategies applied:

1. *Use data effectively* to inform planning

Improving the teaching of writing & assessment literacy

(i) Looking into TSA data to identify students' general strengths and weaknesses in writing

Students' wri...

- *Factual acc...* in story writing
- *Some relevant ideas* ...th *some details* provided in e-mail writing
- *Limited range of vocabulary, sentence patterns, cohesive devices and verb forms* used with grammatical mistakes made
- *Spelling mistakes* found

How can we understand the strengths and weaknesses of our own students?

Hong Kong students' general performance

(ii) Administering **pre-test** to find out writing problems in school

Collecting school-specific learning evidence

Making use of internal and external data to inform planning

Teach BC skills + other writing skills

Content	Language	Organisation
- Relevant ideas - Elaboration of ideas	- Use a small range of sentence patterns - Correct use of tenses - Punctuation - Subject-verb agreement	- Decide on the sequence of content - Use of cohesive devices - Appropriate paragraphing - Correct text structure and features

Strategies applied:

1. *Use data effectively* to inform planning

2. *Review and refine* the design of the writing tasks

Improving the teaching of writing & assessment literacy

Criteria for designing writing tasks

✓ Teach students to write a variety of text-types

✓ Make each writing task meaningful and purposeful

✓ Themes of the writing tasks aligned with the themes of the GE unit → students could put the target language items learned into use

✓ Wider coverage of writing skills

✓ Scaffolding to provide content and language input

✓ Engage Ss in doing SDL tasks to prepare for writing

Exposure to different text types

6A textbook:

Unit	Theme	The task	Text-type covered
1	When I grow up	Write an article for the school magazine to share with your fellow students what you want to be when you grow up and how you would prepare for your future career	School magazine article
3	Fascinating films	Write a film review to promote a film that you like	Film review
5-6	• Problems in our world • How can we help?	Write a poster to help our world	Poster
7-8	• Special times of the year • Happy New Year!	Write about a festival for tourists in a guide book. Suggest what tourists can do in Hong Kong during this festival and give them some travel tips so that their trip can be more enjoyable	Tourist guide book page

Strategies applied:

1. *Use data effectively* to inform planning

2. *Review and refine* the design of the writing tasks

3. Improve the teaching of writing – promote **SDL** & **e-learning** in writing lessons

Improving the teaching of writing & assessment literacy

Elements of a writing lesson

Specifying the text-type taught

⬇

Sharing learning objectives – promote assessment as learning

⬇

Providing opportunities for students to share their learning from the self-directed learning tasks

⬇

Engaging students in using e-tools for brainstorming and organsing writing ideas

⬇

Group writing using iPads

⬇

Share learning outcomes and promote *assessment for learning*

Strategies applied:

1. *Use data effectively* to inform planning

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Improving the teaching of writing & assessment literacy

4. Vary the *modes of assessment* in writing

Types of assessment

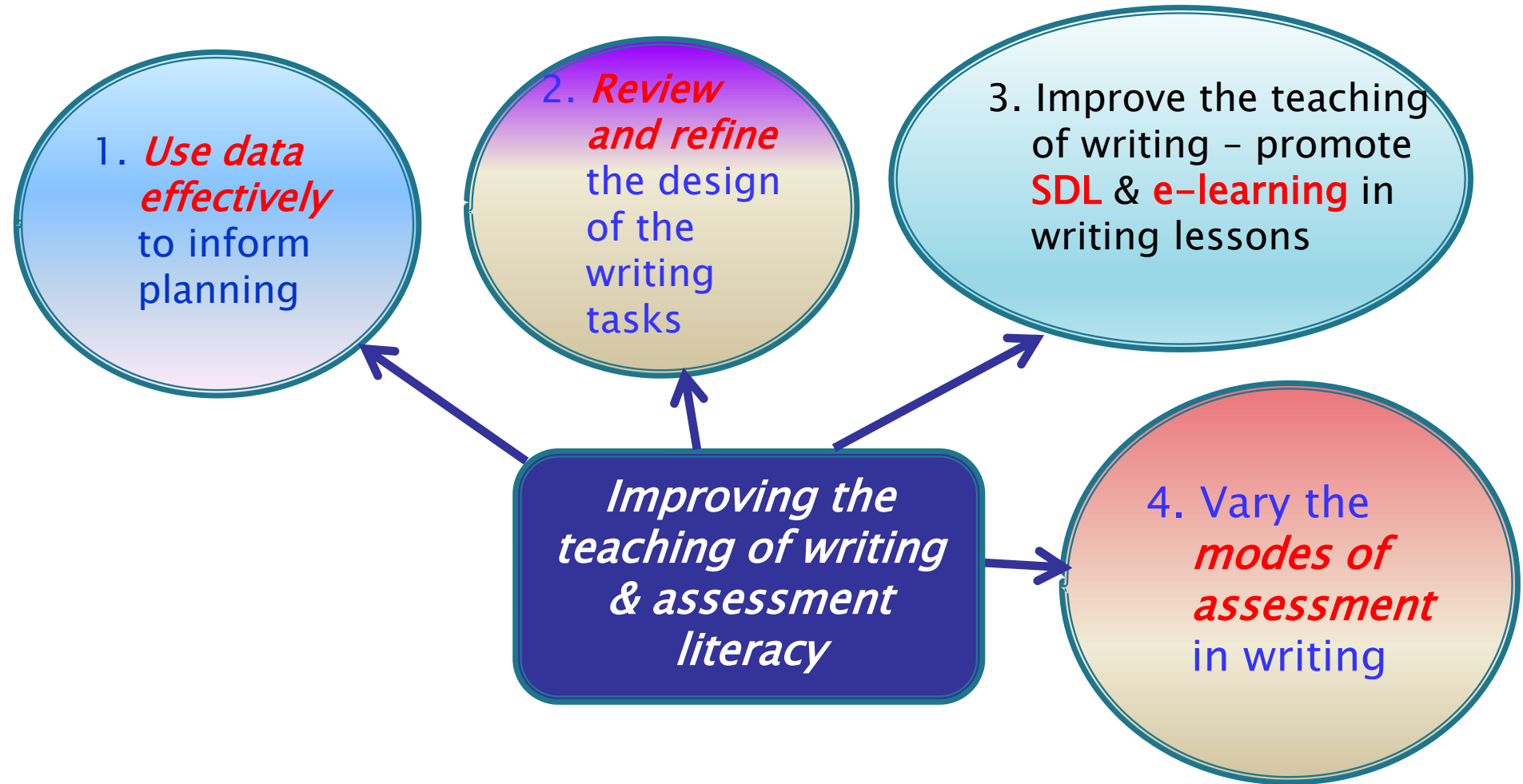| Assessments	
Self-assessment	☑
Peer assessment	☑
Teacher assessment	☑
Parent assessment	☑

Strategies applied:

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Improving the teaching of writing & assessment literacy

4. Vary the *modes of assessment* in writing

5. Provide *quality feedback* for improving writing
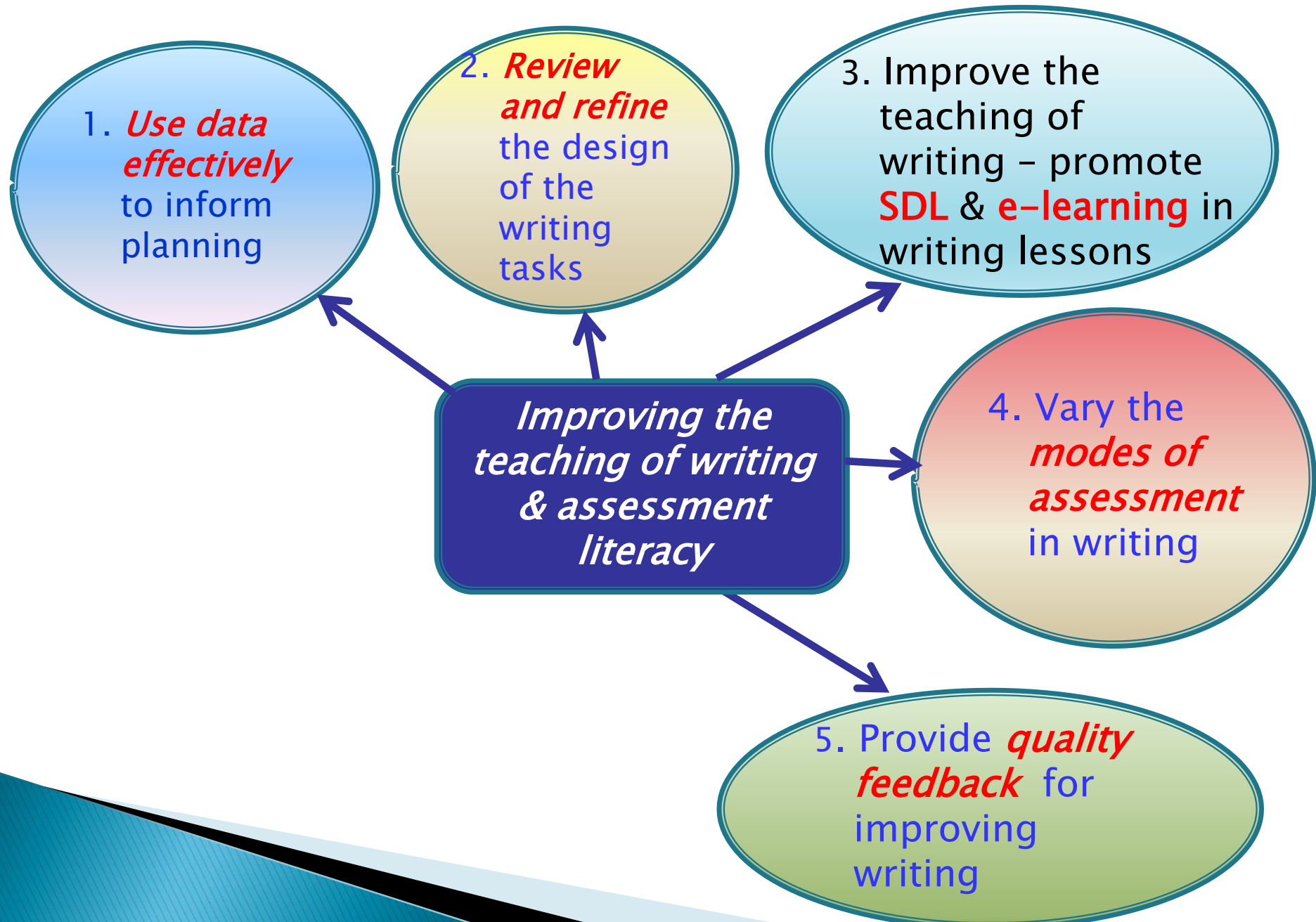
Types of feedback

Use of marking codes

Precise written feedback

Analyse each writing task and exam results in detail and share the strengths and weaknesses with students

a. Marking codes used

Marking Code

Symbol	Meaning
t.	tense
sp.	spelling
p.	punctuation
prep.	preposition
^	missing word
art.	article
//	new paragraph
?	unclear
pron.	pronoun
v.	verb
pl.	plural
s.	singular
adj.	adjective
adv.	adverb
w.w.	wrong use of word

Improvement made in giving feedback
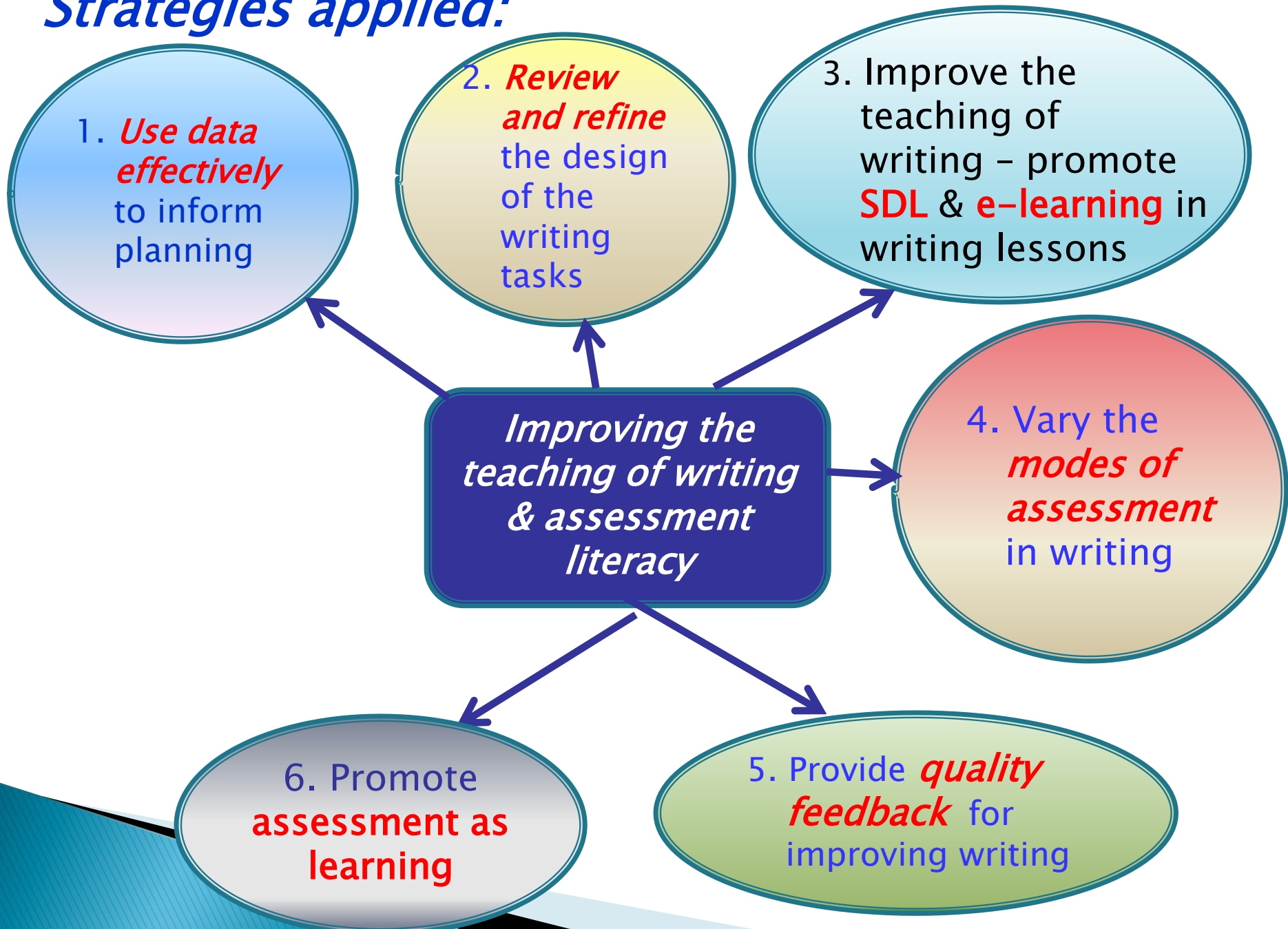
Teachers have learned how to give feedback…

(i) to motivate students to learn

(ii) to help students improve performance

(iii) as a tool for promoting continuous learning

(iv) to build and maintain communication with the students

Strategies applied:

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6. Promote assessment as learning

Assessment as learning

~ *Having students develop and monitor their own learning goals*

1. Co-assessment

- teachers and students collaborate in the assessment process
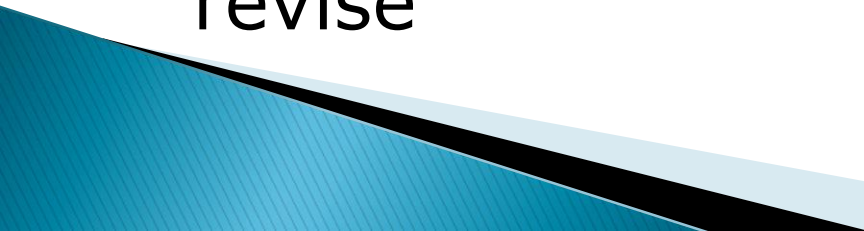
➡ **Writing conferences**

2. Self-assessment

- done with clear rubrics so that students know what requirements they need to satisfy

➡ **Writing portfolios**

Purposes of conducting writing conference

- Provide students with personalised feedback for reflection

- Provide students with immediate feedback or immediately ask for clarifications

- promote positive attitudes about writing and increase students' motivation to revise

Writing portfolio

Content page

1. Writing task record

2. Writing skills sheet

3. Marking codes

4. Writing tasks

5. Self-assessment form (after writing conference)

6. Mid-year reflection

7. Parents' evaluation

With the promotion of assessment as learning, students...

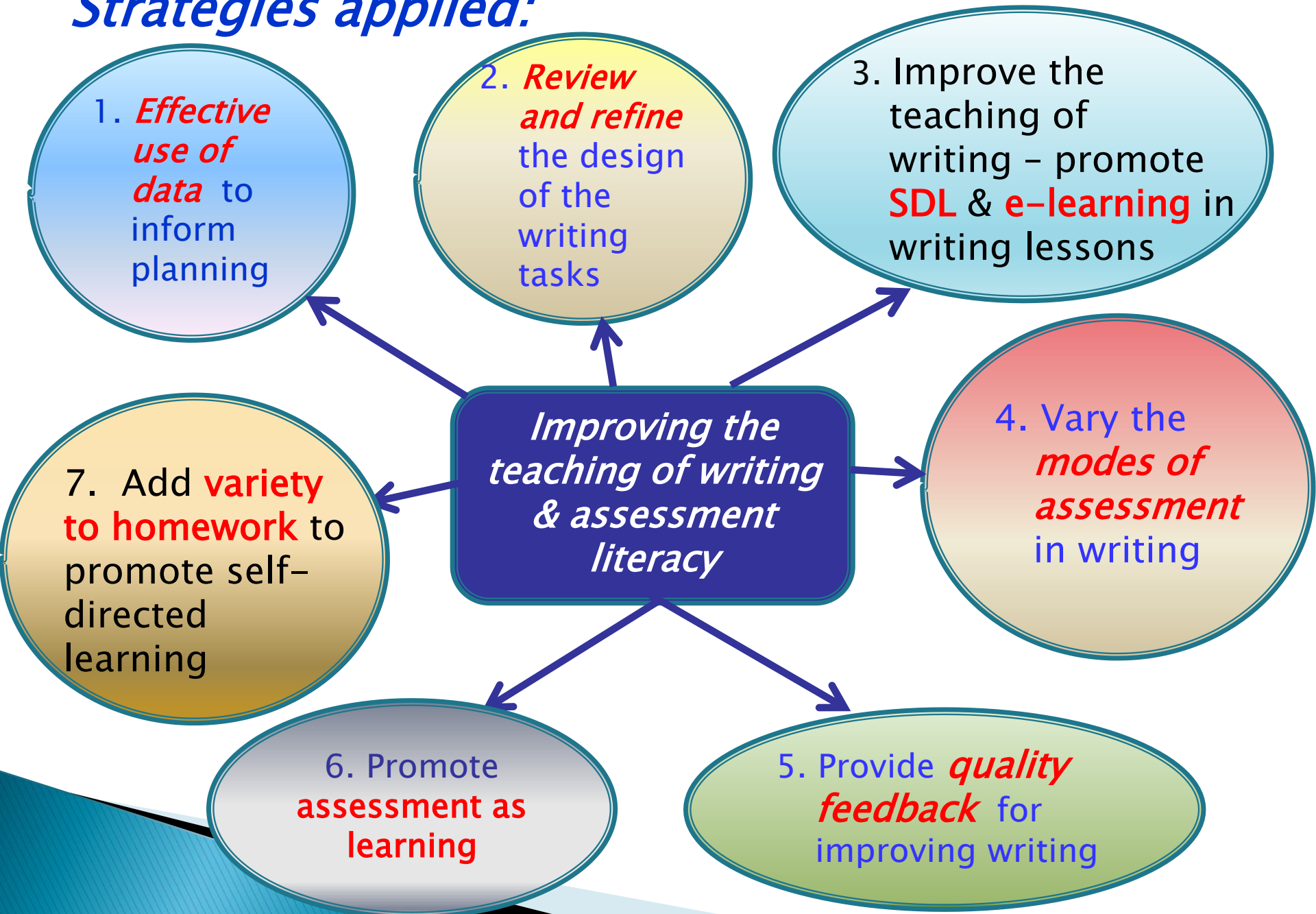were more reflective and accountable for their learning. ☑

could identify their own strengths and weaknesses. ☑

learned to set learning goals. ☑

Strategies applied:

1. *Effective use of data* to inform planning

2. *Review and refine* the design of the writing tasks

3. Improve the teaching of writing – promote SDL & e-learning in writing lessons

7. Add variety to homework to promote self-directed learning

Improving the teaching of writing & assessment literacy

4. Vary the *modes of assessment* in writing

6. Promote assessment as learning

5. Provide *quality feedback* for improving writing

Characteristics of the newly designed homework to sustain students' interest in learning

✩ Made use of STAR and other materials to create post-writing SDL tasks

✩ Allowed Ss to have choices of homework

✩ Made use of the post-writing SDL tasks to give students more practices on the 4 language skills

✩ Engaged Ss in doing self-reflection as a way to promote assessment as learning

✩ Built a link between homework and everyday life experience

✩ Enhanced Ss' creativity

Progress

Teachers have made use of meaningful homework to...

- develop Ss' self-directed learning skills

- increase students' interest and motivation to do homework

- consolidate the targeted skills taught

- develop students' creativity

- cater for Ss' diverse needs

Impact

Student learning

Assessment as learning promoted

- ✔ Become reflective learners
- ✔ Higher motivation to learn with meaningful self-directed learning homework designed
- ✔ Awareness of the learning content raised
- ✔ Able to review their own learning progress and set achievable learning goals
- ✔ More reflective and analytical to mistakes due to enagagement in various modes of assessment

Teacher development

① Facilitated the implementation of various kinds of assessment in the writing curriculum

② Made effective use of data to inform learning and teaching

③ Provided quality feedback

④ Set meaningful homework

Curriculum and assessment literacy development

- ✓ Greater variety in the modes of assessment

- ✓ Effective use of data

- ✓ Higher validity of the questions set for the test and exam papers

- ✓ Better alignment made among learning, teaching and assessment

Conclusion

Improving assessment literacy

- Students had developed a better understanding of the desired learning outcomes and success criteria.

- There was shared understanding of standards and expectations of learning and assessment between teachers and students.

- Greater transparency of the assessment process was provided.