

From Quantity To Quality

*Kei Tsz's road in helping
students to improve their
English writing*

CCC Kei Tsz Primary School

Ms Karen TSE, Ms Ida CHIU & Ms Rainbow WAN

School-based Curriculum Development (Primary) Section
School-based Support Services Office
Education Bureau

Ms Gladys WONG (Senior School Development Officer)

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'Learning in Action : Teach to Learn - Learn to Teach' Seminar

CCC Kei Tsz Primary School

- A primary school in Tsz Wan Shan
- Most students come from families of low socio-economic status
- Students lack family support in English learning
- Some newly arrived Chinese children have very limited previous knowledge / training in English

We began our work three years ago ...

The TSA result was far from satisfactory!

- many students scored 0 in the writing part



Why didn't the students attempt the writing exam?

- Short of ideas
- Lack the vocabulary and sentence structures to express themselves
- Insufficient practice to compose a piece of writing on their own

Mission One

enable students to WRITE MORE

- Provide more inputs through a careful scaffolding of learning tasks and revisiting the vocabulary and structures learnt previously
- Build writing frameworks on some common themes
- Plan and organize students' writing using graphic organizers and guiding questions
- Journal writings

Curriculum adaptation - modular approach + task-based learning

Unit	Language focuses	Language skills		Remarks
1. My good friends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - vocab-verbs: look after, listen to, talk to, shout at, laugh at, play tricks on, fight with, play with - objective personal pronouns: me, you, him, her, us, them 	<i>Reading</i> - Identify key words - Inference skill - interpretation	<i>Writing</i> - write thank-you notes - make sentences about good friends	Text
		<i>Listening</i>	<i>Speaking</i> - talk about good friends using the objective personal pronouns and adjectives	
2. My classmates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - vocab: a) recycle school rooms: classroom, library, music room, playground, computer room, art room b) school subjects: English, Chinese, Maths, General Studies, Computer Studies, Putonghua, Art, Music, PE - adverbs of position: by (the wall), at the front of, at the back of, in the middle of - 'good at' + _ing 	<i>Reading</i> - locate specific information - get the main idea - interpret information and give personal opinions	<i>Writing</i> Make sentences using the adverbs of position	Text PE /o /o
		<i>Listening</i>	<i>Speaking</i> - talk about the seating plan using the adverbs of position - talk about classmates using 'good at'	

Sentence making only!
 The target vocabulary and structures cannot enable students to write a paragraph



Task scaffolding

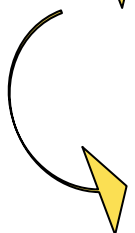
Introduce the adjectives + supporting details



Adjectives	Examples	Opposites
kind / nice	plays with classmates talks to his/ her classmates looks after his/ her classmates	unkind
helpful	helps his/ her classmates with their homework lends his/ her stationery to classmates	unhelpful



Consolidate the knowledge and skills learnt



Apply the knowledge and skills learnt in making sentences



Setting the context for the writing task

Andy is writing to his new pen friend Joey. Read his letter.

Dear Joey,

How are you?

My **name** is Andy Lam. I am your new pen friend.

I live in Shatin. I am eight years old. I go to Happy Primary School. I go to school by school bus. I am in Class 2C. My class teacher is Miss Chan. **Can you tell me something about you?**

My favourite toy is NDS. My favourite animal is a dog. **What is your favourite toy and animal?** I go to the library in my free time. I am good at English. I like writing stories.

What do you do in your free time and what do you like to do at school?

Please write soon!

Yours,
Andy

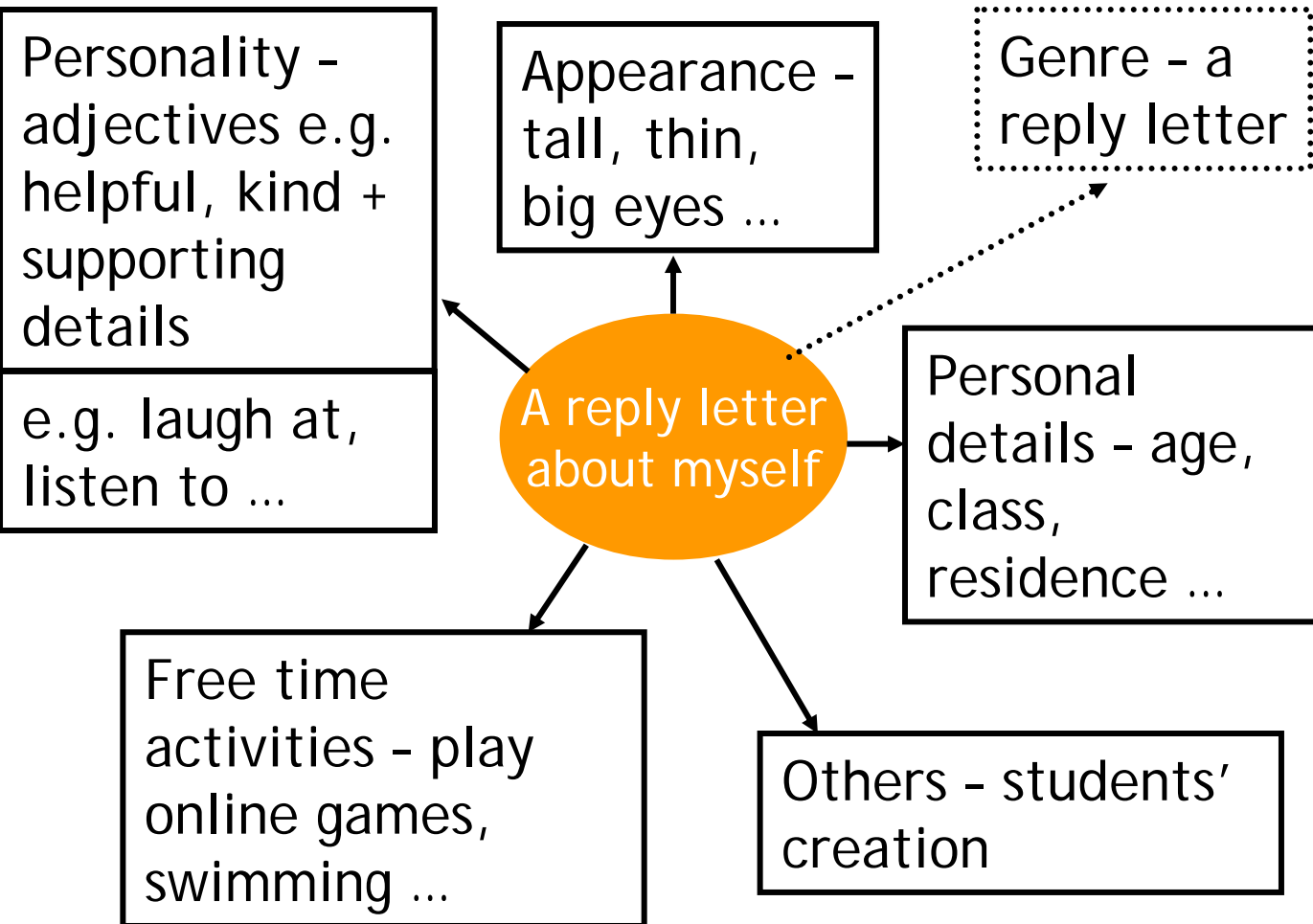
Provide a model

Provide a purpose/reader for students to write

Familiarize students with the target text type



The writing task



Help students enrich their writing by revisiting the vocabulary and structures learnt previously

Help students build writing framework on describing a person

Introduce the use of graphic organizers like mind maps to plan and organize the writing

How well have the students written?

Dear Andy,

Personal particulars

How are you? I am fine, thank you! My name is Joey. I live in Wong Tai Sin. I am ten years old. I go to C.C.C. Kei Tsz Primary School. I go to school by bus. I am in Class 3C. My class teacher is Miss Lo.

My favourite toy is a toy dog. My favourite animal is a dog. I read books in my free time. I am good at Maths. I like doing sums. I can play badminton and write stories but I can't sing.

Student's creation

Mandy is my best friend. She talks to me. She is kind. She plays with me. She is friendly. She doesn't play tricks on me or shout at me. Do you like her?

Please write soon!

Personality + supporting details

Yours,
Joey

Features of a letter

Free time activities

Journal writing

Practice makes perfect!

- Provide **more writing experience** to students
- Provide language support by **linking the school-based writing tasks** with the journal writing topics
- Teachers **refrain from marking every mistake** so as to create **a risk-free environment** (*Graham, Harris & Larsen, 2001*) for students to create and attempt the use of newly learnt vocabulary and patterns

Teachers' hard work bore fruit!

2007 score	P3		P6	
	content	language	content	language
0				
1	There was a great drop in the % of students scoring 0 in 2008!			
2				
3				
4				

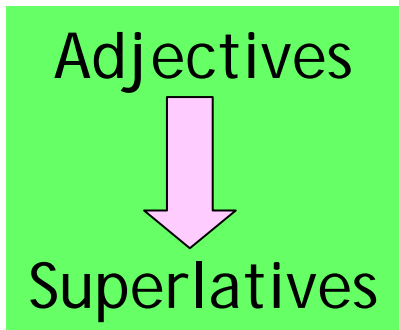
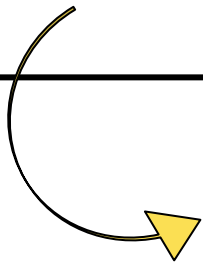
Mission Two

enable our students to WRITE BETTER

- Elaboration - supplied > own creation
- Establish success criteria for a piece of good writing with the students
- Enable students to write on a variety of genres
- Make use of the post-writing lessons to help students enrich the content and edit their work

Enable students to elaborate on the ideas - *supplied > own creation*

Adjectives	Examples	Opposites
kind / nice	plays with classmates talks to his/ her classmates looks after his/ her classmates	unkind
helpful	helps his/ her classmates with their homework lends his/ her stationery to classmates	unhelpful



Appearance	
1. The youngest	nine years old
2. The tallest	160cm tall
3. The heaviest	weighs 70kg
4. The widest shoulders	50cm wide
5. The darkest skin	as dark as chocolate
6. The longest hair	touches his/her waist
7. The thinnest	as thin as firewood

	Personality
8. The smartest	always gets good result in exam <i>does sums very fast</i>
9. The most helpful	our monitor/monitress / group leader <i>help us with our homework</i>
10. The most humorous	always tells funny jokes <i>always make funny faces</i>
11. The most good-tempered	never gets angry <i>very gentle</i>
12. The most hard-working	always goes to the library after school <i>does revision every day</i>
13. The most obedient	always follows the rules <i>never scolded by teacher</i>
14. <i>The most honest</i>	<i>does not tell lies</i>
15. <i>The most patient</i>	<i>listens to the others</i>

Elaboration from textbooks

t	
od stories	
ories every day	
l medal on Sports Day	
st runner	
oice	
ppreciated by others	
the school table-tennis team	
in the competition	
no every day	

Encourage students to elaborate with daily life examples

	<i>very pleasantly to hear</i>
21. The best group leader	always helps us solve problems <i>helps us receive the homework</i>
22. <i>The best painter</i>	<i>can draw good pictures</i>
23. <i>The best flute player</i>	<i>practises flute every day</i>

Establish success criteria for a piece of good writing with the students



Writing Mechanics & Organization	Content	Language	Format
<ul style="list-style-type: none">●I can identify key words in the writing instructions.●I can start my sentences with capital letters.●I can use correct punctuation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">●My writing includes an introduction, body and conclusion.●I can elaborate on my ideas.●I can write about new ideas clearly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">●I can use new words correctly in my writing.●Other readers can understand my writing.●My words are spelt correctly.	Letter/E-mail <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Dear (recipient)- From (sender)- greeting (How are you?)- farewell (Please write soon; I'm looking forward...)

Enable students to write on a variety of genres

P4	P5	P6
<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Story➤ Friendly letters➤ Recount➤ Brochure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Report➤ Reply letters➤ Story➤ Leaflets	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Autobiography➤ Descriptive➤ Book report➤ Narrative

The story structure helps students understand the development of a story



Setting

Time: Once upon a time
Place: in the forest

Characters

Three little pigs
Mother pig

Problem

Mum asked the three little pigs to build their own house.

Events

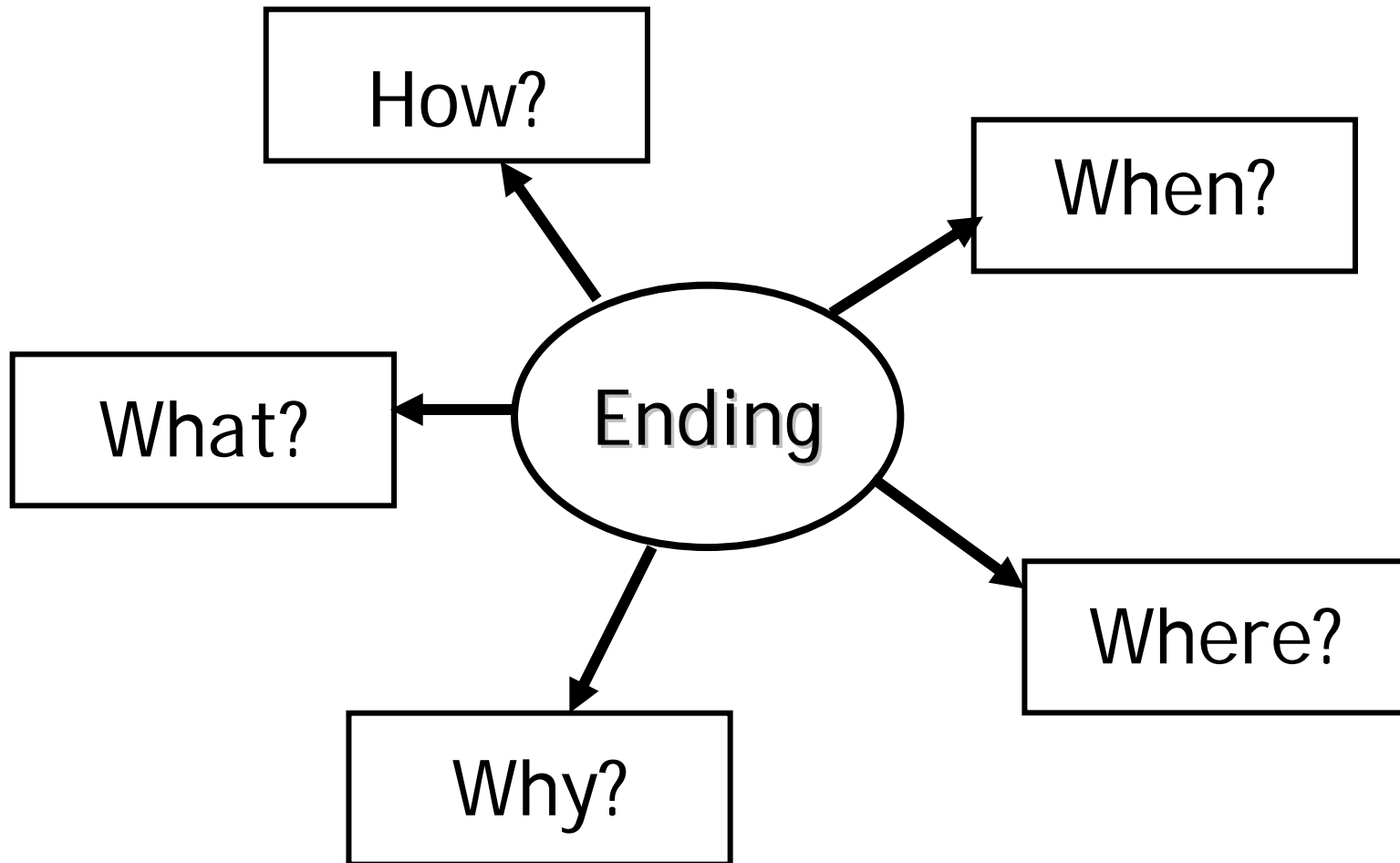
A bad wolf wanted to eat the three little pigs.

1. The wolf blew down the first pig's (straw) house.
2. The wolf blew down the second pig's (stick) house.
3. The wolf could not blow down the third pig's (brick) house.

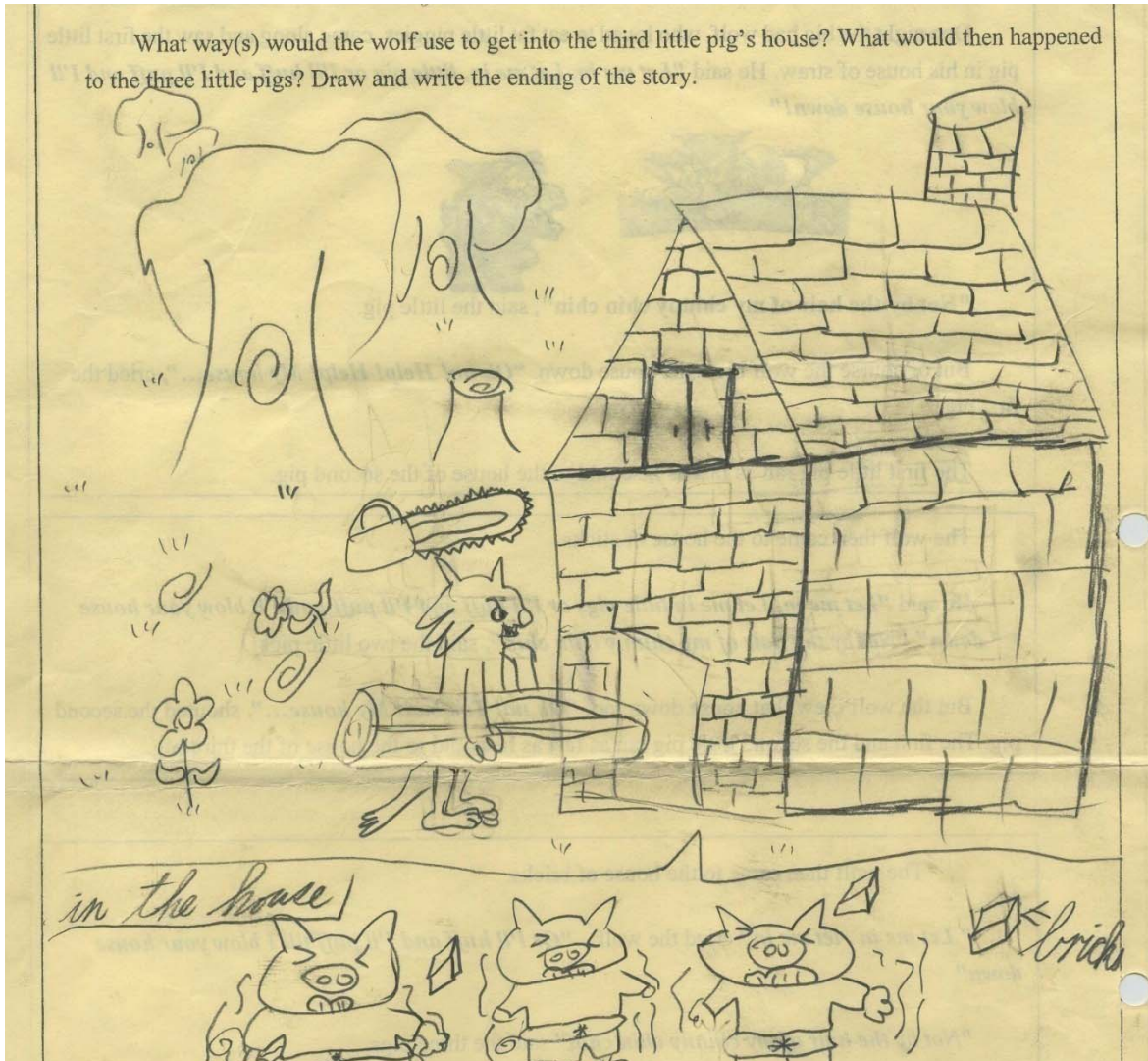
Solution

The pigs lit a fire _____ in the fireplace _____. The wolf fell into _____ the kettle of water _____.

Use a mind map and thinking hats to help students to plan their writing



Encourage students to draw the ending out

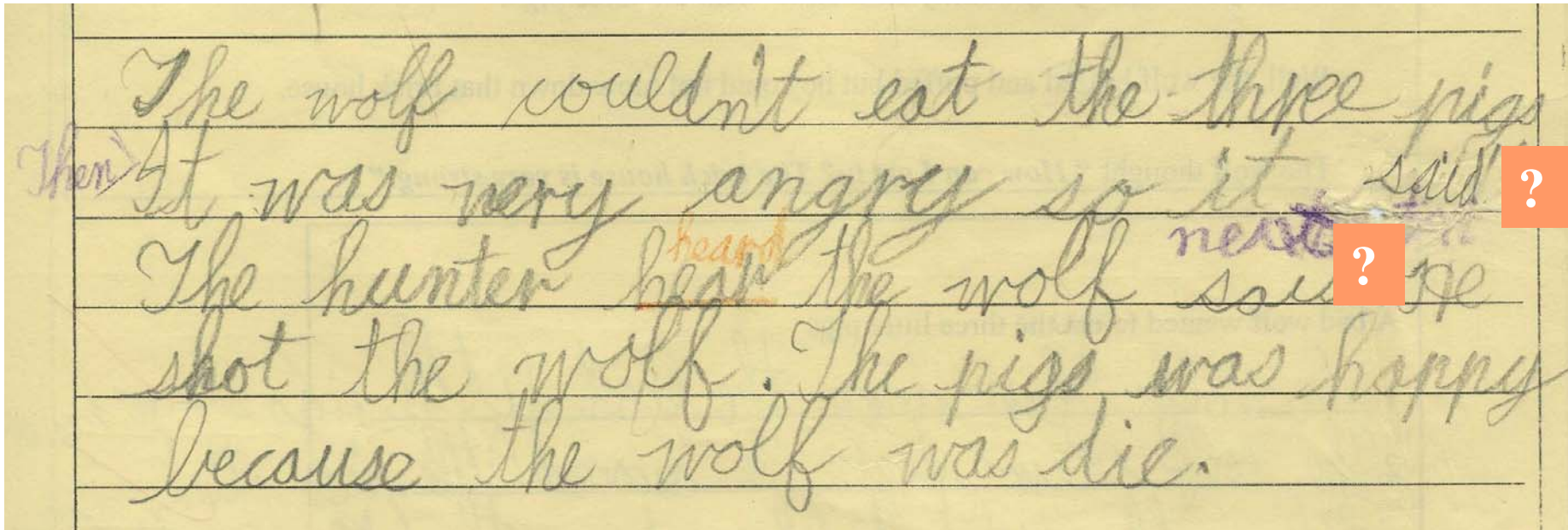


Drawing helps students especially the less able ones to think and create!

Make use of the post-writing lessons to help students enrich the content and edit their work

Our initial attempt in P4

Student A - 1st drafts



Too short! Broken ideas only!

After class discussion under teacher guidance ...

Student A - 2nd draft

Title:

The Three Little Pigs

The wolf couldn't eat the three little pigs. Then the wolf was very angry. So the wolf said 'Open the door, open the door.' The three pigs was frightening. Next the three pigs said 'Help us, help us.' The hunter heard ^{what} the three pigs ^{said} say. He ran to help the three pigs. He shot the wolf. The wolf was die. The three pigs ^{were} was happy.

Use dialogue to connect the ideas





Student B – 1st draft

? The wolf used its paw to scratch the
door. so The Three little were surprised. ? The
Three little, pigs flew ^{pigs} the brick to attack
the wolf. ? The wolf is pressed by the brick
The Three little pigs ran away. ?

Too short!

Broken ideas only!

Title: The Three Little pig's

 The wolf was very hungry. It used its paw to ^{scratch} sataatch the door, so the three little pigs were frightened  because the wolf wanted to ate them. Then the three little pig's ^{threw} flew the brick to ^{attack} attack the wolf  The first pig flew ^{at} the wolf's ears. The second pig flew ^{at} the wolf's ^{arms} arms. The ^{third} third pig flew the wolf's body. Finally, the wolf was pressed by the brick  The three little pig's lived happily by the brick house.



Connect the ideas and enrich the content by providing the reasons and the details of the scene

More advanced try-outs in P5 & P6 to develop students as independent writers

Borrow the ideas of Process Writing

Pre-writing

Revising

Publishing

Drafting

Editing

“Writing is a fluid process created by writers as they work. ... In actuality, **the writing process is not a highly organized linear process**, but rather a continual movement between the different steps of the writing model.” (Gardner and Johnson, 1997)

Phase I: Process writing

Pre-writing

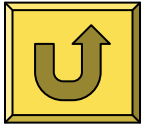
- Purpose for the writing task - reply letter (Fun With Study Tour)
- Input - ideas / language
- Framework - brainstorm ideas by using a mind map

Phase I: Process writing

Drafting: students write their 1st draft

- Write the first draft (individual)
- Whole class analysis enable students to learn from their classmates
- Error corrections students learn from their errors
- Proofreading students edit their own writing
- Peer feedback (Peer editing, Feedback and feed forward)

Write the first draft



Dear Thomas,

I am fine think you and you? You can go to Hong Kong join a music camp. I am very excited. When you join a music camp you can singing, playing piano, watch a concert and some. It is interesting. Also, I ask my mum. you say I can be your host family.

Is it good or bad?

How do you mark it?

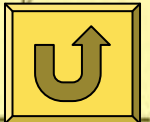
I am fine **think you** and you? You can go to Hong Kong **join** a music camp. I am very excited. When you join a music camp you can **singing**, playing piano, watch concert and some. It is interesting. Also, I ask my mum. **you** say I can be your host **family**.

1. Correct by the teacher
2. Underline the mistakes → students correct themselves
3. Redo

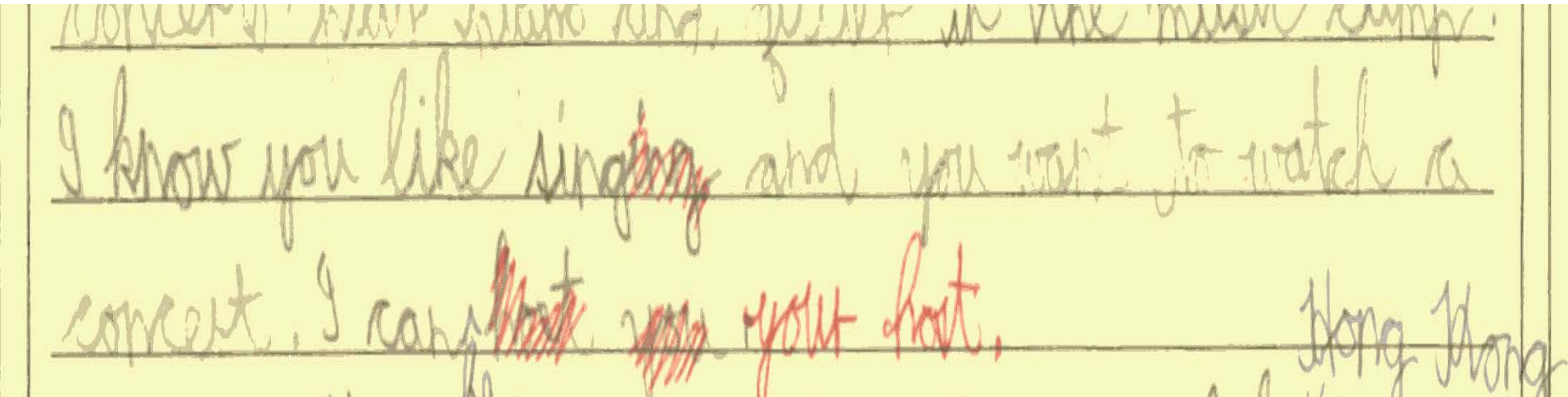
Proofread

Dear Thomas,

I am fine, think you and you? ^{know} ~~When I know~~ You can go to Hong
Kong join a music camp. I am very excited. ~~When~~ ^{if} you join
a music camp you can singing, playing piano, watch a
concert and more. It is interesting. Also, I ask my mum, ^{she} ~~you say~~
I can be your host family.



Peer editing



Original:

I know you like singing and you want to watch a concert. I can be **host you**.

Peer editing:

I know you like **sing** 😞 and you want to watch a concert. I can be **your host** 😊.

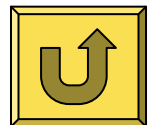
Positive notion:

let students try and think

constructionism

attitude: accept other's opinions

risk taking → major mistakes → peer editing

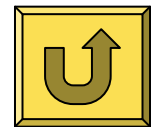


😊 Peer feedback – what classmates can achieve

I would show you around too. You also can go to
Mongkok to buy some ~~thing~~ ^{things} because there are ~~of~~ ^{very} cheap. ~~carpenter~~ ^{carpenter}
You can buy some ~~thing~~ ^{things} for your parents. I ~~do~~ ^{don't} ~~not~~ have any other ideas for ~~me~~ ^{my} trip because you ~~do~~ ^{don't} ~~not~~ have ~~most~~ ^{more} time to go to the ~~mus~~ ^{museums} other place.

😊 You can write a good the end.

Students borrow ideas and language from TSA marking scheme.



☹️ Feed forward – how classmates can improve

28th April, 10

Dear Thomas,

(you can write glad, suprise.....)



I am happy when I know you will coming

soon! ~~Also I am happy you will join a music camp because~~

~~I am join it in July too!~~ In the music camp,

Phase I: Process writing

Revising : based on feedback from peers

Dear Thomas,

I am very ^{surprised} surprised when I know you will

~~coming~~ ^{come} soon! I know you will join the music camp
I ~~am~~ ^{am} ~~what~~ ^{what}

Phase II

Aspects

more focused

Language

- preposition

Inform students of learning intention

Self-editing

Class editing

- linking words
- tense

Content

- elaboration

Involve the students

- feed forward

spelling

proofread

Content - elaboration

Involve the students

- feed forward

spelling

proofread

Elaboration

Original

Five years ago, I had **a** unlucky thing at Chinese New Year. My mum bought me a new **clothes**. I played with my friend. I **was burnt** my new **clothes**. I was unhappy. **Finaly**, my mum bought me a new **clothes**. I was happy.

Five years ago, I had an unlucky experience at Chinese New Year. My mum bought me a new blue jacket in a shopping centre. Then I wore this jacket to play with my friends. Unluckily, my new jacket was burnt by my friend carelessly. I was so disappointed. Finally, my mum saw me that I was unhappy so she bought me another new jacket. After she bought me another new jacket, I was happy again.

Phase II

Means - agree upon the Learning Intentions with students

- Feedback
 - Feed forward
 - Self + peer editing
 - Revising
- 
- conferencing

Thank you!

For professional sharing and exchange, please contact

Wong Kit Mei, Gladys

School-based Curriculum Development (Primary) Section at

kitmeiwong@edb.gov.hk

Phone: 2158 4902

Our Reflections

- Teaching of writing is **time-consuming** but **worth** devoting time and effort!
- **Persistence** is the key to success!
- **Whole-school approach** is essential!
- Maximize the **collaborative lesson planning meetings** for discussion and reflection on the learning & teaching process

26th April, 2010.

Dear David,

How are you? I have decided to join a music camp in Hong Kong in July. 「What can I do in the music camp?」✓ I really like singing and I want to watch a concert. 「Can you be my host?」✓

I have never been to Hong Kong. What's the weather like in Hong Kong in July? I hate cold and dry. 「Shall I take more warm clothes?」✓
「What shall I do when there is a typhoon or a thunderstorm?」✓

「Moreover, what activities can I join in weekdays and weekends?」✓
「Would you please show me around?」 I like visiting museums and amusement parks. I'll take lots of photos and show them to my friends and parents. At last, I would like to buy some jewellery and a digital camera for my parents. Where should I buy them? Do you have any other ideas for my trip? I cannot wait to come to Hong Kong.

Hope to hear from you soon.



Love,
Thomas

weather
report raining hot
clothes travel advice
money bring umbrella

seafood vegetarian
weekend activities through
Ocean Disney

A pen friend
from the U.S.

singing concerts
join a music camp
play piano guitar

necklace
hat jewelry
pen souvenirs game
shoes T-shirt Stan
Bangkok

