

# **Catering for the Needs of Low Achievers in the Writing Classroom**

**SBCDP Annual Sharing Session  
2011-2012**

## **Presenters**

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# **TWGHs Wong See Sum Primary School**

- Located in Tsing Yi and surrounded by housing estates
- Some Newly Arrived Children (NAC) recently came from China
- A few Non-Chinese Students (NCS) from India and Pakistan
- Has adopted co-operative learning for a few years as a strategy to cater for learner differences

# What are the needs for less-achieving students?

**Low  
motivation  
in writing**

**Limited  
vocabulary and  
have problems  
with spelling**

***Lack skills and  
imagination to  
develop stories***

***Some  
students  
could not  
write simple  
sentences***







**Easily forget  
what's been  
taught in  
writing lessons**

**Lack  
strategies to  
develop  
creative  
endings**

# Identifying students' needs

- “In differentiated classrooms, **teachers begin where students are, not the front of a curriculum guide.**” Tomlinson (1999 P.2)
- **Teachers should strive to have deep understanding of where their students are and be flexible and creative in curriculum and classroom practices (WSS teachers)**

# Problems in WSS and changes in Classrooms

Problems		New Strategies
Low motivation in writing		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Introduce Multi-sensory Group Activities</b></li> <li>• <b>Good Writing Appreciation as a kind of feedback</b></li> </ul>
Students <b>need</b> vocabulary support		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Whole-school focus on the teaching of vocabulary and parts of speech</b></li> </ul>
Some students <b>need</b> support on sentences patterns		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Explicit teaching of structures</b></li> <li>• <b>Reward students who use new structures</b></li> <li>• <b>Teachers' feedback in classroom for encouragement</b></li> </ul>
Lack skills and imagination to develop stories		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Explicit teaching of skills</b></li> <li>• <b>Introduce Multi-sensory Group activities to let students imagine</b></li> </ul>
Lack strategies to develop creative endings		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Explicit teaching of ways to end stories</b></li> <li>• <b>Teachers' feedback on students' ideas</b></li> </ul>
Retention of skills is problematic		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Explicit teaching of skills and recycling of skills in tasks</b></li> </ul>

# Our Principles on Helping Less-able Students

- Understanding **S**tudent Needs
- Multi-**S**ensory teaching
- S**caffolding
- E**xplicit teaching and recycling of writing skills
- F**eedback during and after writing
- G**roup work

**SSS EFG**

# P.3 and P.6 Writing Classroom

**Simon wants  
to be fit**

**An insect  
in a drink**

**The grasshopper and  
the ants**



## **Vocabulary development over the years**

- From recognition to application
- From sentence level to paragraph level
- From exercises to examinations

# Understanding **S**tudent Needs:

## 2. Sentence Patterns

Subject + Verb + Object

**The object can be.....**

- Mary is a **student**. (Noun phrase)
- She is **hard-working**. (Adjectival phrase)
- She studies at **HK Primary School**. (Prep. phrase)
- She reads **very quickly**. (Adverbial phrase)

**So.....** Subject + Verb + Object



Noun + Verb + Ideas

# Understanding student Needs: 2. Basic Sentence Patterns

Wong See Sum Primary School.  
P.3 English.

Objective: Identifying the parts of speech and making simple sentences.

**Task 1** Discuss with your classmates whether the following English words are Noun(名詞), verb(動詞) or Adjectives(形容詞)...

They	Peter and his mother	is
Mary	Children	am
delicious	Monkeys	Apples
fat	feel	He
tall	are	I / You
happy	sad	tired
beautiful	yummy	-----

Write the words into the right place.

Nouns	Verbs	Adjectives
They	feel	tired
Mary	are	beautiful
Peter and his mother	is	yummy
Children	am	delicious
Monkeys		fat
Apples		tall
He		happy
/ You		sad

**Task 2** Now use the words above to make some sentences with this pattern ↓

**Noun + Verb + Idea (adjective)**

e.g. He + is + fat.  
(noun) (verb) (adjective)

1. \_\_\_\_\_ + \_\_\_\_\_ + \_\_\_\_\_  
(noun) (verb) (adjective)

2. \_\_\_\_\_ + \_\_\_\_\_ + \_\_\_\_\_  
(noun) (verb) (adjective)

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

# Understanding students' needs: 2. Basic Sentence Patterns

Task 3: Tell whether the following English words are nouns or verbs.

Elephants	eat	Students
Babies	drink	Peter
listens	do	My sister
play	draws	music
speaks	Dogs	football
sees	bananas	English
Ms Lee	milk	a mouse
The cat	homework	like
a picture	-----	-----

Write the words into the right place.

Nouns	Verbs	Nouns
Elephants	eat	bananas
Babies	drink	milk
Students	do	homework
Peter	draws	a picture
My sister	hears	some music
My father and I	play	football
Ms Lee	speaks	English
The cat	sees	a mouse
Dogs	like	bones

Task 4: Now use the words above to make some meaningful sentences using the

**Noun + Verb + Idea (Noun)**

e.g. Elephants + eats + bananas.  
(noun) (verb) (noun)

1. \_\_\_\_\_ + \_\_\_\_\_ + \_\_\_\_\_  
(noun) (verb) (noun)

2. \_\_\_\_\_ + \_\_\_\_\_ + \_\_\_\_\_  
(noun) (verb) (noun)

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

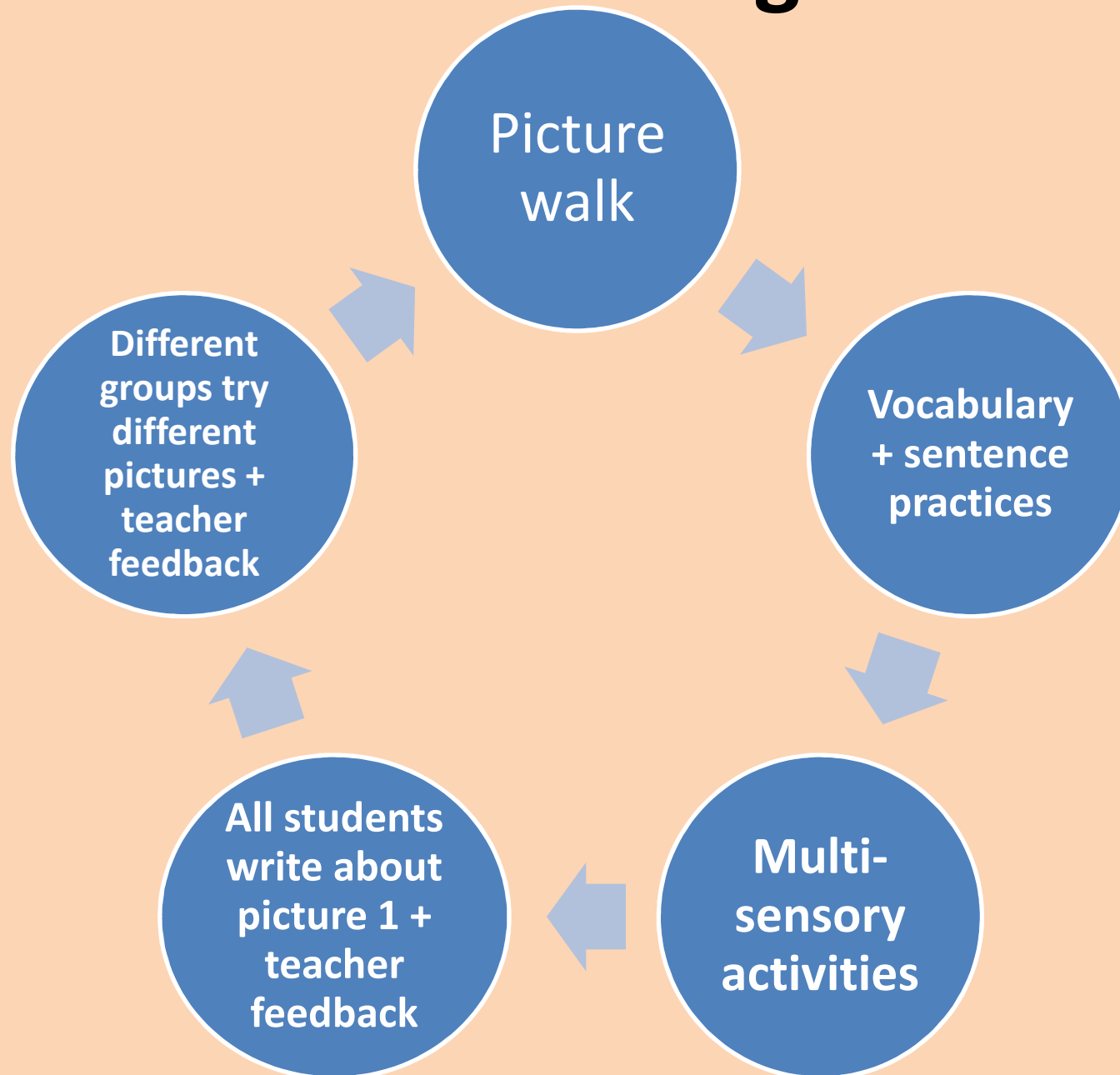
5. \_\_\_\_\_

6. \_\_\_\_\_

# Students learning how to make sentences

<b>Simon</b>	<b>is</b>	<b>fat</b>
<b>Simon</b>	<b>plays</b>	<b>badminton</b>
<b>Simon</b>	<b>does not eat</b>	<b>cakes</b>
<b>Simon</b>	<b>is</b>	<b>fit now</b>

# Scaffolding



# Multi-Sensory Activities in the Classroom

## What is it?

*Using a multisensory teaching approach means helping a child to learn through more than one of the senses.*

## How can this be done in actual classrooms?

- *Touching and moving about something*
- *U-tube/TV viewing*
- *Pair discussion*
- *Role-playing*
- *Group discussion*
- *Imagining*
- *Hands-on tasks*
- *.....*

# Multi-sensory Activity 1:

## Visualize, touch, move and read aloud sentences

- **Visualize** the positions of different parts of a sentence.
- **Touch, move and think** how different parts of a sentence should be arranged.
- **Read aloud and finger point** at sentences made to reinforce learning of different patterns



## Multi-sensory Activity 2:

Involve students to talk about the story/ part of the story

Do a **picture walk** with questions of different difficulty levels to lead student to **think about** the pictures

Who is Simon?

Who is the woman in the picture?

Where is Simon?

What are they talking about?

Why are the classmates laughing?

# Multi-sensory Activity 2:

**Involve students to talk about the story/ part of the story**

Lead students to **think beyond the pictures.**

Can you think of some questions to lead students to do this?

What does the teacher talk about in picture 1?

What are different ways to keep fit and gain weight ?

What other sports should Simon try?

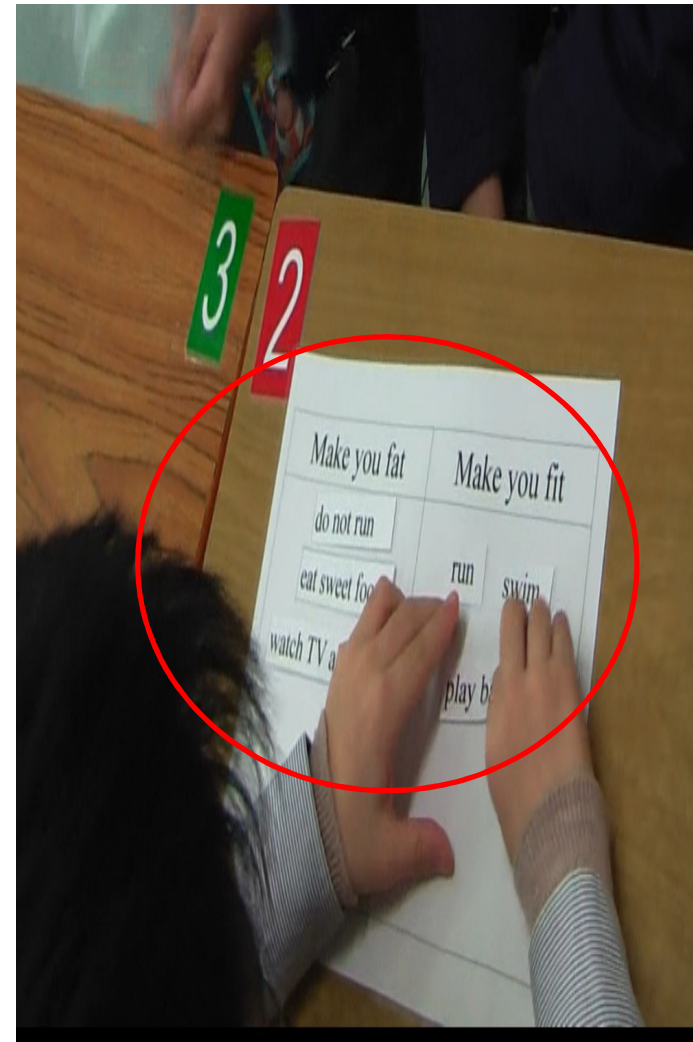
Name some food that Simon should avoid.

What other activities can Simon do to keep fit?

# Involve students to talk about the story

## Discussion in the less-achieving class

- provide questions for students to think about
- provide phrases for content of discussion
- let students put the correct ideas under different groups



# Involve students to talk about the story

## **Discussion when students are ready:**

- Peer support
- Language for discussion
- Choose topics students can use easy vocabulary
- Students could share ideas

# Multi-sensory Activity 3:

## Involve students in role-plays

### Helping less-able students to do role-play:

- Give them **simple props** to help them imagine
- Allow students to do some **reading aloud practice** before they do it in front of the whole class
- Invite **2 groups for comparison**
- Some shy students prefer **group role-playing**

# Multi-sensory Activity 3:

## Involve students in hot-sitting

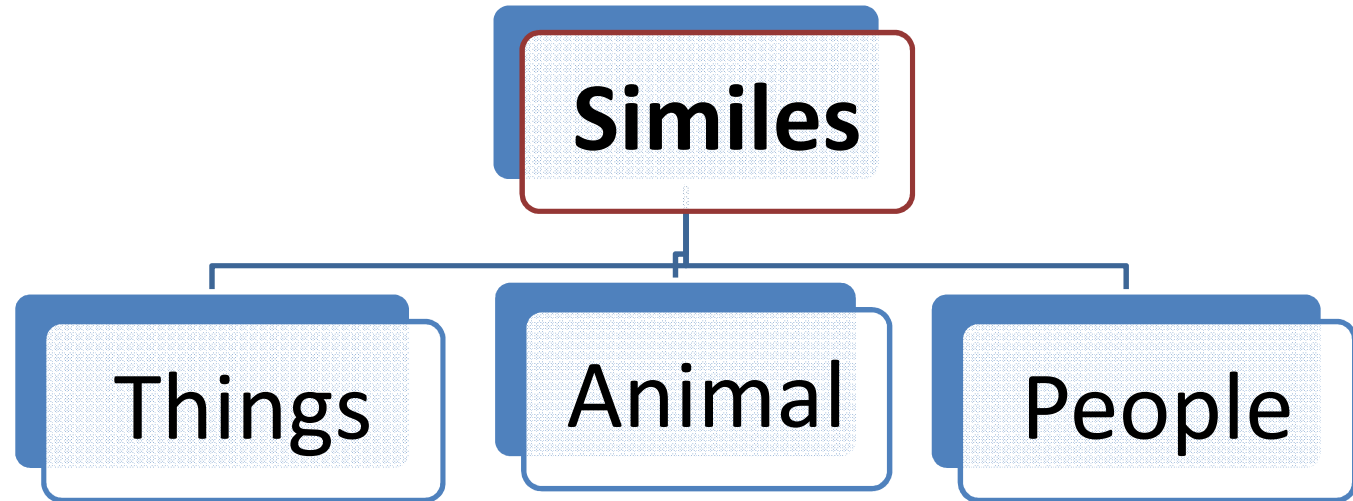
### **Hot-sitting:**

Helps less-able students to imagine who they are talking to

**Easier than role-plays** as that is only a one-way communication

# Multi-sensory Activity 4:

## Using U-tube to learning similes



The grasshopper's voice is as sweet **as the sound of a music box.**

The grasshopper's voice **is as sweet as a bird's sound**

The grasshopper's voice is **as sweet as Susan Boyle's.**

# Showing U-tube materials in the classroom

- find something students **have not seen or heard before**

- link the video to your teaching focuses**



# Ideas generated in group discussion

The grasshopper's voice was as cute as a baby's voice.

The grasshopper's voice was as lovely as Joey Yung

The grasshopper's voice was as loud as Miche Jackson.

The food was as huge as a ship.

The food was huge like a whale +

The food was as big as the world.

# Students' Opinions of Multi-sensory Activities

- Interview of some SEN students.
- Two days after Ms Po's writing lesson with **pictures**, see **u-tube videos**, **pair discussion** on the use of similes, listening to **sounds** of the grasshopper, moving of sentence patterns.....
- They remembered:
  - 1.They have learned **as....as** and **....like...**
  2. They **touched and moved** some sentences with N+ V + I pattern

# Group Learning

## (Pair work + 4 student work)

- The scholar's opinions about group learning:
  - Promotes independent thinking such that pupils gain a sense of control over their learning.
  - Develops speaking and listening skills allowing pupils to share feelings and ideas.
  - Encourages positive self-esteem allowing pupils to build confidence in their own abilities
  - Improves relationships enhancing pupils' sense of social responsibility

**Galton, M. & Williamson, J. (1992)** *Groupwork in the Primary Classroom*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul

# Teachers' worries about group learning:

- How would students feel if they are identified being weak students in the group?
- How can students develop a habit of sharing inside the school in a short period of time?
- Are able students willing to help the less able ones?
- Students are learners. How can a learner help another learner?

# Believe in students' ability

Core school value:

- **To care about one another, especially the less-able students**
- **To accept every schoolmate**
- **To emphasize whole-person development**

# Group Work to Facilitate Real Exchange between Students

- Clear instruction from teachers
- Use of round-robin technique (turn-taking) /pair work
- Stress the need to help others in group work
- Tell high achievers that they cannot dominate the group work
- Low achievers must take part in each learning activity

# Teachers' Feedback

**International Scholar: John Hatti (1999)**

## Teaching strategies use in the classroom

The most powerful single moderator that enhances achievement is **feedback**: providing information how and why the child understands and misunderstands, and what directions the student must take to improve.

Feedback 0.94

Direct instruction 0.82

Questioning 0.41

Computer-assisted instruction 0.31

0.2 Weak

0.5 Average

0.8 Strong

**INFLUENCES ON STUDENT LEARNING : University of Auckland**

## Local Scholar: 趙志成

令學生投入課堂學習，上好每一課，理解學生學習的難點而給予回饋，已是非常照顧學習差異了

(趙志成：沒有照顧學習差異的教學方程式 2011 March 14)

照顧差異，最重要是**如何理解學生學習**，然後給予回饋。

(趙志成：三談照顧學習差異策略：總結篇 2012 Jan 9)

<http://www.hkptu.org/education/?cat=77>

# Teachers' Feedback

The huge impact of teachers' immediate feedback

The use of 'because' in students' work before and after teachers' feedback

**Before** Ms Chiu's feedback

**After** Ms Chiu's feedback

**Very few**

**26** times among **18** students



# Students' use of 'because'

## More-able students: Proficient usage

One day, the teacher talks to Simon. He is overweight. And the classmates laugh at Simon because Simon is fat. Simon feels unhappy and sad. The teacher talks to Simon this is not healthy, so he needs to keep fit. Simon starts his healthy life as soon as possible because he want to keep fit.

# Students' use of 'because'

Average student: indiscriminate usage

Simon is fat because he eats cake. The teacher is unhappy  
because Simon is very very fat. Simon is unhappy because  
fat. The teacher does not like Simon because he is fat. The class  
laugh at Simon. Simon is very very fat.

Less-able student: attempting to use

Simon is excited because his classmates feels Simon is fit and  
healthy. Simon is happy.

# Target Error Correction on Simon wants to be fit and healthy

Help your schoolmates to correct and improve the sentences.

- **After school, He plays badminton.**
- After school, he plays badminton.
- **Simon is excited because His classmates like him.**
- Simon is excited because his classmates like him.

- **Simon is fit. His classmates feels excited.**
- Simon is fit. His classmates feel excited.
- **Simon feel sad.**
- Simon feels sad.
- **The teacher talk to Simon.**
- The teacher talks to Simon.

## 3C

- Simon is unhappy **because** he is fat. His classmates laugh at him. Teachers advises him to play sports.
- Simon plays badminton because he wants to keep fit and healthy again. He does a lot of exercise and feels tired.
- Simon's father gives him some cakes and candies. Simon says, '**I keep fit now.**'
- **Finally**, Simon is fit and healthy again. His classmates feel surprised.
- **Good use of dialogues;**
- **Good use of cohesive devices;**
- **Good use of *because***

# Explicit Teaching and Recycling of Skills

Explicitly tell students the skills they have to learn at the **beginning**, in the **middle** and **end** of the lesson.

**Demand students to display the skills taught in writing tasks** and reward students for being able to do this.

Skills taught **should be recycled and consolidated** in the next writing task.

# Explicit teaching of different ways to end a story

- **Don't just tell students the ways. But invite them to think aloud with classmates.**
- Design a new character
- going to a new place

# Clear Writing Skills Requirements

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ ( ) Class :3 ( ) Creative Writing Exercise 3

Use the list to check over your writing.

I	Items to be checked	Bonus
☺☺☺☺	I can write 50 words or more.	1
☺☺☺☺	I spell the words correctly.	1
☺☺☺☺	I can use suitable cohesive devices in the story. e.g. <b>One day</b> Simon is unhappy. <b>First</b> Simon plays badminton.	1
☺☺☺☺	I can use present tense to tell the story about Simon. e.g. <b>Simon plays</b> badminton.	1
☺☺☺☺	I use suitable connectives to join sentences such as <b>and, or, but, because and so.</b> e.g. <b>I can dance but I can't swim.</b>	1

Teacher's comment

- You can write a story about Simon.
- You can use present tense to tell the story.
- You can use suitable cohesive devices in the story e.g. "One day", "Then".
- You put your ideas together very well.
- You have something missing in your writing:

You should write more about

Content(0-6)

Language(0-4)

bonus (0-5)

A. Use this list to check over your writing. Colour the smiley after you have checked your writing carefully.

B.

I	Items to be checked	Bonus
☺☺☺☺	I spell the words correctly.	
☺☺☺☺	I use suitable connectives to join sentences such as <b>and, or, but, because and so.</b> e.g. <b>I can dance but I can't swim.</b>	1
☺☺☺☺	I used some saying words such as <b>say(s), ask(s), answer(s) and shout(s).</b>	1
☺☺☺☺	You can write good sentences. <b>Noun + Action + Idea</b>	1
☺☺☺☺	Use dialogues in the story.	1
☺☺☺☺	I can add a new character to end the story. Change the place at the end of the story.	1

Teacher's comment

- You can write dialogues correctly.
- You can use write good sentences.
- You can use suitable connectives e.g. "and", "but", "or".
- You put your ideas together very well.
- You can write a creative ending.
- You have something missing in your writing:

You should write more about

## Other Teaching Materials with Specific Skills (Take them if you need them)

Topic	Skills
Fat boy eating too much	Writing different creative endings
Helping a poor classmate	Using monologues to enrich content
New Cinderella	Using different cohesive devices
An accident in the drawing class	Using interjections to convey meaning
Penny wants to join the music club	Use of 'so' and paragraphing
When mum was sick.....	Use of dialogues and creativity



**Outside  
writing classroom**

**Teachers' conception,  
collaboration and persistency**

**Clear curriculum  
framework**

**Assessment for  
learning culture**

**Dictation  
Practice**

**School  
environment**

**Life-wide  
learning**

**Cater for  
needs of  
less-achieving  
students in  
writing**



**Inside  
Writing Classroom**

**Understanding  
S** Student needs

**Multi-S**ensory  
tasks

**S**caffolding

**E**xplicit Teaching  
and Recycling of  
Writing Skills

**T**eacher  
**F**eedback

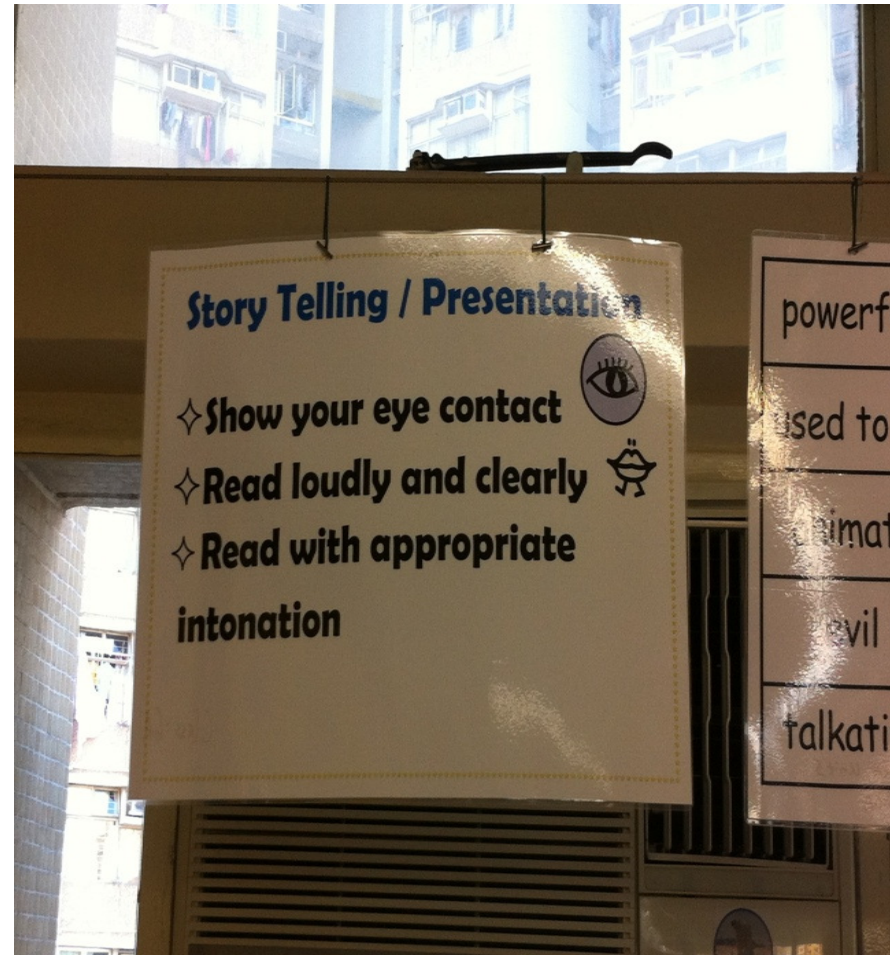
**G**roup work

# School Environment:

## Daily usage and important issues



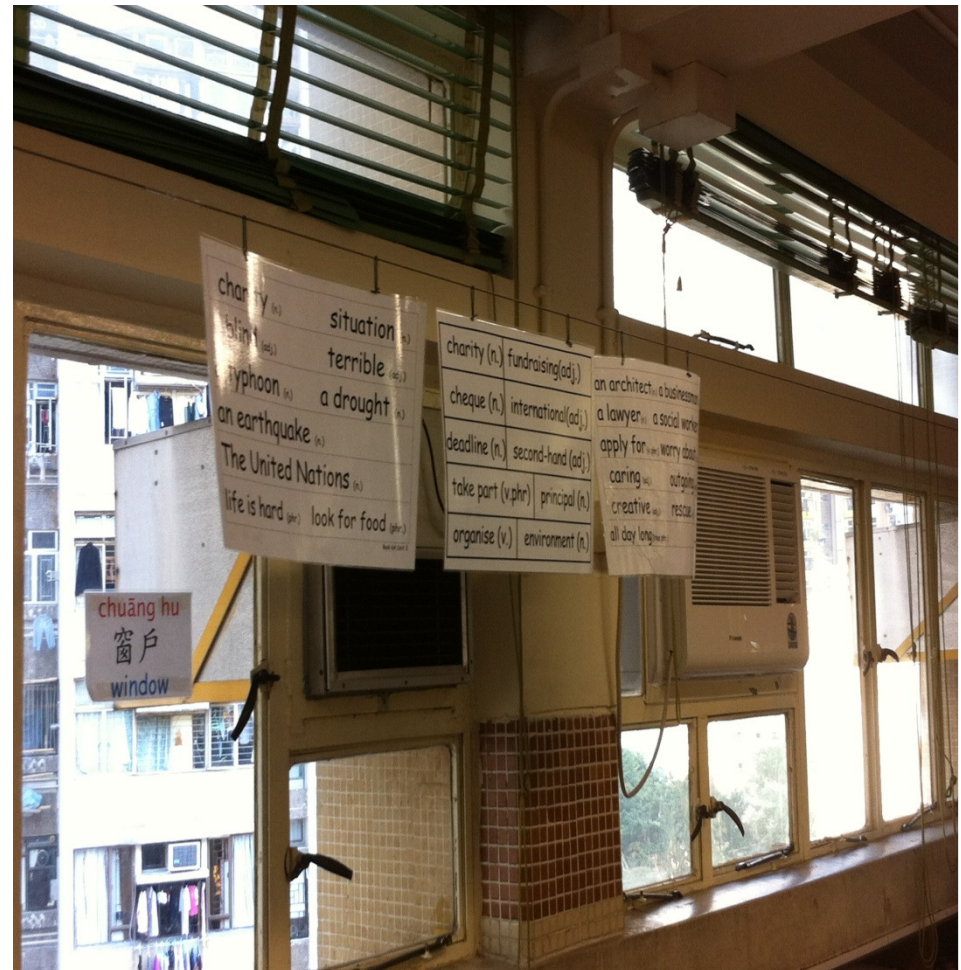
P.3 and P.4 Classroom



P.5 and P.6 Classroom



# School Environment: Vocabulary Learning



# Life-wide Learning



**P. 3 Visiting a shopping centre**

**P. 5 Interviewing tourists in Stanley**

**P. 6 Visiting Hong Kong Airport**

# Conclusion

- There is no simple formula to cater for learner diversity
- Think about the ways we teach and the ways students learn
- Never give up on low-achievers

Understanding  
**S**tudent Needs

Multi-**S**ensory  
teaching

**S**caffolding

**E**xplicit teaching  
and recycling  
of writing skills

**F**eedback during  
and after writing

**G**roup work

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