

CDC Committee on English Language Education 2007-09
Gist of the Fourth Meeting

Date: 8 July 2009
Time: 4:30 p.m.
Venue: Room 1419AB, Wu Chung House, Wan Chai, Hong Kong

1. Confirmation of the minutes of the meeting held on 15 May 2009

The minutes of the last meeting were confirmed with some amendments shaded in the revised version.

2. Matters arising from the minutes

- Members of the Ad Hoc Committee on Assessment for Learning had been informed of the dissolution of the committee and thank-you letters sent to appreciate their contributions.
- The deadline for submission of entries for the Sunday Smile Drawing and Writing Competitions had been extended to 23 Oct 2009 because of school suspension to prevent the spread of human swine flu.

3. Report and discussion on the work of the NET Section

- Officers from the NET Section of CDI reported on the work of the Enhanced NET Scheme (ENET) and the Primary NET Scheme (PNET). It was explained that the main duties of the Section were to create an authentic English environment in schools, help students develop life-long interest in learning English, help teachers develop innovative teaching and learning strategies, and disseminate good practices. It was reported that as at 9 Feb 2009, there were a total of 931 NETs - 514 from primary schools and 417 from secondary schools. To support the NETs, two support teams, the Advisory Teaching Team (ATT) and the Regional NET Co-ordinating Team (RNCT) had been established.
- The ATT uses the NETs as a point of entry into schools to support the English Panel and helps to conduct school-based workshops and projects like the Literacy Programmes. The ATT also organises and conducts centralised professional development programmes for all English language teachers, including the NETs. Projects such as Primary Literacy Programme – Reading (PLP-R), Primary Literacy Programme – Reading and Writing (PLP-R/W) and KS2 Integration Programme (KIP) have been conducted. Different resource materials have been developed.
- The RNCT provides school-based support and organises district clusters. Apart from centralised professional development programmes, the RNCT also conducts professional development workshops for different school sponsoring bodies. Different resource materials, such as NET-working, an English resource package series to complement the NSS English curriculum, and STELLAR, also another resource project, with a language arts focus to complement the NSS English curriculum, have been developed.
- It was reported that the effectiveness of the NET Schemes were reflected from the positive findings in different evaluations, including a 3-year longitudinal study on Territory-wide Evaluation conducted by the Melbourne University and HKIEd, School Self-evaluation of the NET Scheme in 424 schools, the Annual Survey of School Support and the evaluation conducted after each of the centralised professional development workshops.
- Members were invited to raise questions and comment on the work of the NET Section. The following suggestions and responses were noted:
 - The work of the NET Section was comprehensive. It was important for the local English teachers to work collaboratively with the NETs and learn from one another.
 - About half of the teachers attending the professional development programmes organised by the NET Section were local English teachers.
 - It was important to attend the workshops in person to facilitate in-depth understanding and effective use of the materials.

- The NET Section conducted special professional development programmes for the NETs during staff development days organised by the school sponsoring bodies.
- Schools could seek help from the ATs to establish a network to organise English learning activities but it was necessary for the schools to get permission from the school principals concerned.
- It was pointed out that supporting the NETs well in their first contract helped encourage them to continue their service in Hong Kong.
- The report details of the Territory-wide Evaluation were available on the EDB website.

4. Discussion on the support measures to enhance the learning and teaching of English

- The Vice-chairperson drew members' attention to the tabled document, 'Extract from the Legislative Council Brief on Fine-tuning the Medium of Instruction for Secondary Schools'. Members were invited to give suggestions on how to ensure that the resources provided to schools could be well spent to enhance the learning and teaching of English and the impact be sustained.
- Apart from expressing difficulties in monitoring how the grants could be effectively spent, members made the following suggestions to help schools have sustainable development:
 - Schools should be encouraged to conduct projects to try out innovative teaching strategies and generate good practices.
 - Experts from overseas could be invited to give workshops to schools to enhance teachers' professionalism. However, some members responded that massive adaptation might be needed and teachers might find it difficult to implement the ideas in the local context.
 - Supply teachers could be provided to release teachers to attend the professional development programmes or to implement projects on strategic curriculum planning in school. However, it was doubted if the supply of qualified supply teachers could meet the needs because a grant for hiring supply teachers was provided starting from 2009-2010 to release teachers to take up the professional development programmes to meet the qualifications specified by the SCOLAR.
 - Extra teachers with 1-year contract could be hired to allow time and space for teachers to reflect on their teaching and identify ways for improvement.
- The primary school teachers were invited to comment on whether the existing grants provided for buying English books and resources were enough. The teachers reflected that it depended on the programmes to be conducted in schools. It was suggested that grants could be provided for the purchase of additional books to assess students' reading ability before and after the reading programmes as well as materials to create a print-rich environment in schools.

5. A.O.B

The Vice-chairperson expressed gratitude to all the members for their contributions during their term of office, especially those who had served the committee for 6 years. She looked forward to close collaboration with the members on other occasions.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:45 pm.