



## Working together to bridge the gap between primary and secondary levels

### Background

With the introduction of the New Senior Secondary curriculum, teachers of SKH St John's Primary School and NLSI Lui Kwok Pat Fong Secondary School are concerned about how they can best prepare their students for the new curricula. Primary teachers wanted to know if there was a gap between the primary and secondary curricula while the secondary teachers were concerned about students' enough exposure to English in primary education.

As stated in the English Language Curriculum Guide (2002), students would undergo a transition period from Primary 6 to Secondary 1. Careful handling of the transition helps students with different backgrounds and learning needs to build up positive self-esteem and to remain motivated towards learning in school. Both schools showed interest to work together to support their students to have better transition.

In this two-year project, teachers of the primary and secondary schools worked together to bridge the gap between the P6 and S1 curricula through curriculum mapping and planning, hoping to enhance their professional capacity and improve students' language proficiency.

### Levels

Primary school: P1-P6 (whole school approach)

Secondary school: S2 & S3



## Strategies used

Year	Target group	Strategy
Phase I (07-08)	Teachers of both schools	<b><u>“Cross-fertilisation” between teachers of the two schools</u></b>
		Data analysis In order to have a deeper understanding of and reflection on the current practices in teaching, learning and assessment, the officer collected and analysed data from various sources such as the primary and secondary curricula, the textbooks used, their schemes of work, the assessment tools, lesson observation and interviews of both students and teachers.
		Inter-school lesson observation Teachers of both schools had an opportunity to observe each other’s lessons and discuss afterwards. This helped them to have a better understanding about the curricula and teaching and learning needs of both sectors.
		Sharing and discussion The teachers had an opportunity to sit together and exchange their ideas/experiences and difficulties encountered in curriculum planning and adapting the pedagogy to cater for learner diversity.
		Inter-school activities Primary school teachers and students were invited to attend the S2 story-telling competition allowing for better communication between the two schools.
Phase II (08-09)	Students of both schools	<b><u>“Cross-fertilisation” between students of the two schools through a Cross-key Stage Speaking Enhancement Programme</u></b> Twenty-seven S3 students were engaged in speaking activities with forty primary students in P4 & 5, helping them to prepare for a reader’s theatre competition. This interaction benefited both groups of students in terms of their English proficiency but then the secondary students could also develop a sense of responsibility and leaderships skills.



## Gaps identified



From our observation and data analysis, there were gaps identified in the communication between the two schools, the curriculum, teaching pedagogy and students’ learning. To enhance a smooth interface, we provided an opportunity for the professional exchange between the two schools’ teachers and students and we worked with St John’s teachers to facilitate better curriculum planning and pedagogy adaptation.





## What happened

**Year:** 07-08

**School:** SKH St John's Primary School

**Focus:** Making curriculum and pedagogy adaptation to support primary students for better transition

Gap identified	Strategy used	School-based example	Level involved
<p>Lack of a solid foundation to prepare for the NSS curriculum</p>	<p>Using vocabulary building strategies to lay the foundation for students</p>	<p>Realising that students' poor vocabulary power directly hinders their interest in reading, teachers developed a vocabulary bank with the help of a language support officer. The bank included theme-based word walls at all levels inside the classroom to increase students' sight vocabulary, the use of high frequency words in daily lessons and different vocabulary building strategies and activities infused into unit planning. As a follow-up, we designed vocabulary cards and books for sentence making and journal writing to help them memorise words and apply what they have learned.</p>	<p>P1-6</p> 
	<p>Infusing the NSS curriculum initiatives into primary language learning</p>	<p>The officer organised internal panel sharing for teachers, discussing the features of the NSS curriculum and how to use holistic planning to bridge the transition gaps. She then co-planned with P3, P5 and P6 teachers, infusing the NSS elements (such as the use of language arts and critical thinking) into horizontal planning. This gradually helped broaden the depth and breadth of their language learning.</p>	<p>P3, P5 &amp; P6</p> 

<p>Lack of language exposure</p>	<p>Integrating the formal and informal curricula</p>	<p>In order to provide more opportunities for students to practise using English, we organised different English programmes outside the classroom that were coherently integrated with the formal curriculum. This included the English week, English assembly and tea time with John (a speaking programme run by the NET). The school also trained up some higher form students as English ambassadors to motivate lower form students to study English during recess time, thus making English learning fun and interesting.</p>	<p>P1-6</p>  
<p>Lack of motivation to read and weak reading skills</p>	<p>Nurturing a reading to learn culture</p>	<p><b>Inside the classroom</b> The school targeted at having a balanced coverage of different text types at all levels, infusing more language arts elements such as movies, songs, poems and stories into lessons to stimulate students' reading motivation. In addition, they designed different reading tasks to develop students' reading strategies.</p> <p><b>Outside the classroom</b> A <b>Buddy Reading Programme</b> was implemented to nurture a positive reading atmosphere in the school. Some P5 and P6 students were chosen to support P1 and 2 students to read storybooks during lunch, aiming at increasing the lower form students' motivation and developing the higher form students' leadership skills.</p>	 

**Year:** 08-09

**School:** SKH St John's Primary School and NLSI Lui Kwok Pat Fong Secondary School

**Focus:** **Cross-key Stage Speaking Enhancement Programme**

**Objective:** To improve language proficiency of both primary and secondary students and to develop secondary students' leadership skills

**Activity:** Twenty-seven S3 students engaged in speaking activities with forty primary students in P4 and P5, helping them to prepare for a reader's theatre performance

## Cross Key Stage Speaking Enhancement



**Primary students  
(P4 & P5)**



**Secondary students  
(S3)**



**LLSS officers + teachers  
of both schools**

### 1<sup>st</sup> training session

- getting to know each other
- pairing up primary students with the speaking ambassadors
- practising reading the scripts



### Planning and discussion

- setting the objectives of the programme
- designing the schedule and procedure of the programme
- writing the scripts based on readers

### 2<sup>nd</sup> training session

- revisiting the speaking criteria
- teachers modelling reading
- individual coaching
- taking turns to present



### Workshop for primary teachers

- sharing the objectives of the programme
- introducing the features of reader's theatre
- asking the teachers to design scripts for the reader's theatre
- discussing how to develop students' speaking skills

### 3<sup>rd</sup> training session

- taking turns to rehearse in front of others with the help of the PPT presentation provided by the speaking ambassadors
- evaluating each others' performance through a speaking checklist



### Workshop for secondary students

- introducing the features of reader's theatre
- showing how to use the voice to express feelings
- teaching the procedural language for helping primary students
- discussing how to organise students to rehearse

### Reader's theatre competition

- primary students performing on the stage
- choosing the best group and giving feedback
- presenting certificates to the primary students and speaking ambassadors



### Follow-up practice

- giving constructive feedback to the secondary students and training their leadership skills before each coaching session
- the teachers designing props and arranging follow-up tutoring for the primary students after each coaching session



## Impact on teachers

### **Bridging the gap through curriculum planning**

Teachers have increased their awareness of knowing what the curriculum required in order to bridge the gap between primary and secondary levels. They have a more holistic view on increasing students' language exposure by integrating the formal and informal curricula. In addition, with the aim of nurturing a reading culture in the school, there was a better utilisation of the 40% reading workshop in the reading curriculum.

### **Improving teaching, learning and assessment practices**

Teachers are more aware of shifting from teaching language forms and functions to skills and strategies development of the students. They paid more attention to using language arts and different text types to increase their students' language exposure.

Having exchanging ideas and discussion after inter-school lesson observation, the secondary teachers found that more could be done on developing secondary students' vocabulary building strategies as their vocabulary bank was rather limited. In addition, different activities can be designed to cater for learner diversity.

## Impact on students

### **Buddy Reading Programme**

Based on the research findings, the lower form students became more interested in reading English books, especially with their Reading Ambassadors. The Reading Ambassadors reflected that they benefited from this programme as they read more books and have improved their reading skills. It was also a good opportunity to develop their leadership skills.

### **Cross key-stage Speaking Enhancement Programme**

Based on the survey data and interviews, we found that the primary students liked the Speaking Ambassadors and they enjoyed practising speaking with them. With the help of the Speaking Ambassadors, they paid more attention to using the correct pronunciation and intonation in daily speaking. As shared by some students, their motivation and confidence in using English increased after participating actively in the reader's theatre competition.

The Speaking Ambassadors enjoyed participating in this activity, especially when they saw improvement among the primary students and when they showed appreciation on the work they have done. The leadership and independent skills were gradually developed among the Speaking Ambassadors. During training, they learned how to understand the needs and problems encountered by their tutees and found the appropriate strategy to cater for their needs. In addition, in order to demonstrate as a good model for the tutees, some Speaking Ambassadors joined together to practise reading the scripts before each training session, thus enhancing their language proficiency. In general, it also helped their personal development as they learned how to be patient and respect others.



## Facilitating factors

### Support from the principal and the panel chairpersons

Both the primary and secondary principals and panel heads were supportive. They were able to arrange teachers to facilitate the training sessions of the speaking programme to ensure it can be run smoothly. In addition, the primary school provided the necessary support and resources such as classrooms and manpower for the speaking programme. In addition, the teachers arranged follow-up practice after each training session which greatly helped to sustain the skills and knowledge the students have learned in each training session.


### Open-mindedness and flexibility in managing change

Understanding there were gaps between the primary and secondary levels, both the primary and secondary panel heads and teachers were ready and willing to open up their classrooms for exchanging ideas and facilitating discussion. To increase students' language exposure, the primary school was proactive in integrating the formal and informal curricula by organising different English reading activities. To enhance the smooth interface across levels, the panel heads were able to transfer the experience of teachers having co-planning with the LLSS officer to the whole panel through internal sharing, thus enhancing the sustainability of the impact from one level to the other.

## Difficulties and suggestions

Difficulties	Suggestions
Lack of time to arrange cross-fertilisation activities such as inter-school lesson observation, discussion and the speaking programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Working out a holistic plan of the programme earlier can help both parties to have better co-ordination of the in-house and inter-school liaison</li></ul>
Lack of readiness of some teachers to make a smooth interface between the primary and secondary curricula	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Organising co-planning sessions and internal sharing to extend the impact from one level to other levels</li><li>Inviting core teachers to lead the other teachers to transfer individual learning to the development of the whole English panel</li></ul>

## Way forward



To enhance a smooth interface between levels, the primary school teachers will pay more attention to developing a balanced and coherent curriculum with the understanding of the requirement of the NSS curriculum. In order to increase students' language exposure, a whole school approach to the running of the Buddy Reading Programme will be adopted next year by involving students from all levels.



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## Promoting language across the curriculum: How English and subject teachers work together to improve students' learning

### Introduction

What would you reply if a parent asks you, “Who is going to teach my child how to read and write in school?” As a parent, it would be natural to think that all teachers share the responsibility of creating the best literacy experience for their children. However, in reality, it is quite a challenge to ask subject teachers to teach reading and writing and they have their reasons. First, they are not trained to teach reading and writing as are their English colleagues. Second, they would not have the time to add the “new” element to their already overloaded curriculum. So is it possible to ask the English teachers to do all the teaching? The answer is no. It is simply because the English teachers themselves do not have time to teach subject specific English for the subject teachers when they are too busy with the preparation for the New Senior Secondary (NSS) curriculum.

The solution to this problem is not to shuffle the literacy responsibility onto other’s shoulders. But we need to work collaboratively to use a cross-curricular approach in planning our school-based curriculum.

### Case sharing

The following school cases show how teachers address the above challenges using different strategies in different school contexts.

#### **Case 1: “Reading strategies across the curriculum” in Wa Ying College**

### Background

With the implementation of School-based Assessments (SBA), students are required to read lots of fiction and non-fiction texts. It is necessary to help students understand the texts better by teaching them reading strategies. At the same time, Liberal Studies is a core subject for the NSS. Students are also required to read extensively. If teachers can help students transfer the strategies they learn in English to other subjects, students will find reading more manageable.



### Strategies used

As an EMI school, all subjects should share the responsibility of enhancing students’ English standards. Reading strategies should be taught and practised in different subjects so that students can practise them in different subject contexts. However, in reality, some subject teachers were concerned about the limited time and their own training. To address these concerns, we adopted the following strategies:

Concern	Solution
No time to plan and teach the Reading Strategies across the curriculum program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus only on reading strategies</li> <li>• Number of subjects involved is limited to 2 to 3</li> <li>• Only four periods are needed</li> </ul>
Subject teachers do not know how to teach English	A workshop on how to teach reading strategies is delivered to all teachers involved. In the workshop, teachers are encouraged to use the materials they plan to use as training materials. In other words, at the end of the workshop, all teaching materials are prepared for future use.
Subject teachers do not believe it is their job to teach students English	Teachers are shown that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All teachers have the responsibility of teaching students how to read and write</li> <li>• To raise students' awareness of the language will help them learn the subject better</li> </ul>

## Programme description

After attending a workshop on teaching reading strategies, the English teachers would teach the strategies in their English lessons first, then in next week, the Liberal Studies teachers would re-model the strategies and guide students to practise the strategies in the Liberal Studies lessons. In this way, students had a chance to practise the strategies learned in both the English context and Liberal Studies context. The whole process took only 4 to 5 lessons for each subject.

## Reading strategies taught across the years

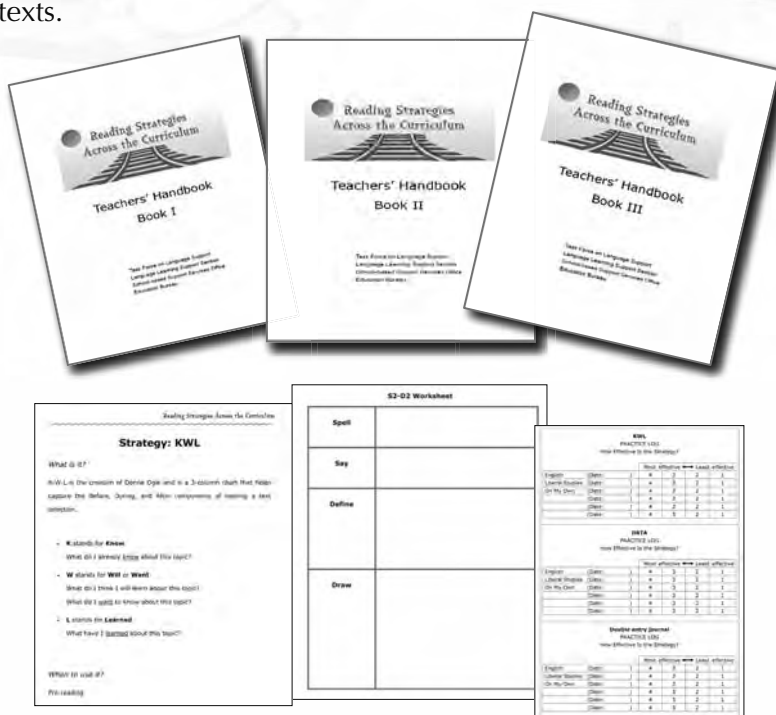
	06-07	07-08	08-09
Reading Strategies covered (Pre-reading, while-reading, vocabulary building and post-reading strategies)	1. Predicting 2. Questioning 3. Clarifying 4. Summarising	1. KWL 2. Directed reading and thinking activity 3. Double entry journal 4. Spell Say Define Draw 5. Word sorts 6. 321 strategy	1. Anticipation guide 2. INSERT 3. Word Map 4. Summary frame
Department(s) involved	English	English and Liberal Studies	English, Liberal Studies and History

Notes:

1. "KWL" refers to "what students know about the topic, what they want to know about it, and what they have learned."
2. "321 strategy" refers to "3 things students have found out, 2 interesting things, and 1 question they want to ask".
3. INSERT stands for "Interactive Notation System for Effective Reading and Thinking".

## What students think about the programme

In the students' interview, one student mentioned that she found the strategies quite useful in helping her understand the reading text. Another student pointed out that she would use these strategies in two new subjects such as Science and History. One student thought that these strategies should be given more practice in each subject. Finally, one student hoped that History and Chinese would join the project next year because she thought these strategies could enhance their understanding in reading History and Chinese texts.



## Case 2: Language across the curriculum at Immanuel Lutheran College

### Background

In response to one of the recommendations made in the ESR Report (June 2004) that "School-based curriculum development needed to be strengthened through collaboration and sharing among teachers to devise strategies to encourage students to apply the generic skills they learned across different Key Learning Areas", the school has been working on the promotion of Language across the Curriculum (LAC) to enhance the application of those skills across different Key Learning Areas (KLAs). Attempts have been made to foster cross-curricular links and collaboration between language and content teachers to support students' use of English as a medium of learning and to facilitate the development of thinking skills.

Basically, the whole-school curriculum across subjects is organised by knowledge structures (KSs) (i.e. patterns of organising knowledge which are common to all subject areas and all levels of students). KSs include description, time sequence, classification, comparison and contrast, cause and effects. According to Bernard Mohan (1986, Ch.2), KSs are central to core thinking skills across curricula and can be expressed in the form of graphics. They underlie content-area reading and writing of expository discourse and are realised in grammar.

## Knowledge Structures (KSs) covered across the years

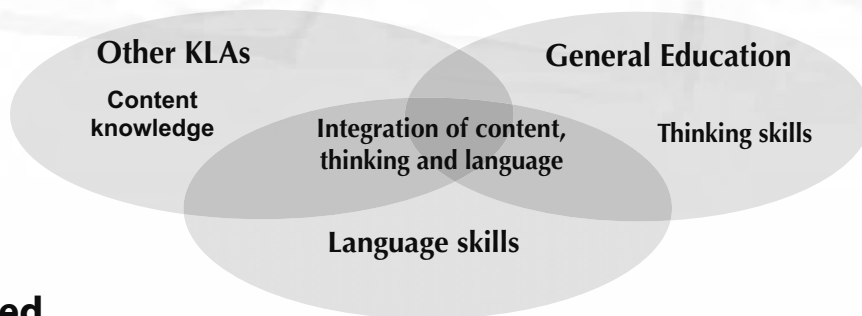
Year Level	S1		S2
School Year	(2007-09)	(2008-09)	(2008-09)
KS covered	1. Description 2. Classification	1. Description 2. Classification 3. Questioning 4. Sequence	5. Making comparison 6. Cause & Effect
Subject involved	General Education, English, Integrated Science, Visual Arts		General Education, English, History

## Strategies used

Concern	Solution
No time to plan and teach the program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Link is made between <b>English</b> and <b>one content subject</b> in each term at one level.</li> <li>➤ <b>Only one topic</b> is addressed through a <b>particular KS</b>.</li> <li>➤ Only <b>6-8 English periods</b> and <b>2-3 subject periods</b> are needed <b>per term</b>.</li> </ul>
Subject teachers do not know how to teach English and Language teachers may not know much about the subject content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Language and subject teachers play <b>specific and complementary roles</b>. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers of General Education <b>teach explicitly the thinking skills</b> essential to the target KSs.</li> <li>• English teachers <b>teach explicitly the language skills</b> relating to the target KSs through materials developed from textbook units.</li> <li>• Subject teachers provide opportunities for students to <b>apply and use</b> the thinking and language skills of target KSs in subject contexts through reading and writing on the chosen topics.</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ Both language and subject use <b>texts and graphic forms</b> of the target KS in respective classrooms.</li> </ul>
Subject teachers and language teachers may not see the need for and believe in the efficacy of developing students' learning and thinking through the integration of content and language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ A collaborative project is piloted involving the core team members who are the Science panel head (vice-principal), the subject convenor of Visual Arts &amp; teacher of General Education (the co-ordinator of school curriculum development) and English teacher &amp; level co-ordinator (the EMI co-ordinator).</li> <li>➤ Awareness &amp; capacity building of language and content teachers are enhanced through regular reporting of work, experience sharing, demonstration teaching, peer lesson observation and discussion.</li> </ul>

## Programme description

In General Education lessons, the teacher would develop students' thinking skills which would then be reinforced in the English lessons and lessons of other subjects. In addition, the English teachers would teach explicitly the language of the target KSs through an extended unit developed from the English textbook unit. Students had a chance to practise and use the learned language of the target KSs in different content subjects through reading and/or writing.



## What happened

Target knowledge structure: Comparison and Contrast  
Level: S2

### General Education

Developed students' thinking skills essential to making comparisons

- Comparing from multiple perspectives
  - Pros and cons, basis of comparison
- Evaluating
  - Giving one's view (taking stance and choosing one perspective)
  - Providing evidence
  - Making value judgements



### English Language Education

Enhanced the thinking skills needed to make comparisons through reading

- Differentiated descriptive paragraphs and paragraphs of comparison.
- Read expository texts and organised ideas using graphic organisers (e.g. feature analysis matrix, Venn diagram)

**An ideal seat in my classroom**

(Evaluation) the worst seat  
(Evidence) distant from teachers  
(Cons) cannot listen to teachers' instructions clearly → have positive effects on my learning

(Evaluation) the worst seat  
(Evidence) closer to teachers  
(Cons) listen to teachers' instructions clearly → have positive effects on my learning

Basis of Comparison (比較項目)		A	B
1 百雜環境 (Surrounding)	• 雜音、走廊、出口、佈置、座位老師 (view, accessibility)		
2 附近設施 (Proximity to facilities)	• 風扇停機、儲物櫃 (fan/fan-conditioning, lockers etc.)		
3 觀景無阻的視野程度 (Clarity of looking at the blackboard)	• 死光、被門桌遮擋 (Position, blocked view)		
4 隱密度 (Privacy)	• 老師盯著、隔人經過 (sally spotted by teachers and passers by)		

1 引言 Introduction 說明將會比較以不同的理由

2 運點比較 Making Comparison 有理由的距離 (distance from teachers) 觀看角度 (angle of looking at blackboard)

3 總結 Conclusion 表明你的選擇 State your preference 列出相關的理據 Give evidence to support your view

Complete the Venn Diagram below. Write about the differences in the outer circles. Write about the similarities where the circles overlap.

Jacket A      Similarities      Jacket B

Differences      Differences

**Analysis Matrix**

General Features	Special Features	Both	IPC Mall	Flower Market
Location:	is accessible by MTR is located in the city			
Products sold:	luxury cheap			
Number of shops/stalls:	more than 1000 shops less than 100 shops			
Opening hours:	opens from afternoon till night opens till evening			

**Task 1**  
Read the following texts. Decide whether they are paragraphs of comparison. Support your views with reasons.

More people change their shopping habits from traditional shopping to online shopping. The reason for the change is that online shopping saves people's time. You can shop at home or at the office as long as you like. The more convenient internet makes online shopping possible 24 hours a day.

For me, I like traditional shopping more because the products can be physically examined on display. I enjoy going shopping with my friends. It's a very good social activity.

More people change their shopping habits from traditional shopping to online shopping. There are some similarities but there are some differences between traditional and online shopping. Both traditional shopping and online shopping offer a wide range of goods and services. Both serve all time customers' needs. Unlike traditional shopping, online shopping is more convenient for customers as they can access to internet online shopping possible 24 hours a day.

I like to go to different places for shopping. One of the places is IPC Mall. It is located near the Star Ferry and Century Square. There are over 200 international luxury brands and a unique new experience. The mall is easily accessible from all forms of public transport. Express Line. In addition, its advantageous position adds a sense of afternoon of shopping.

The other shopping area I like to go is Flower Market. It is at 2:00pm and it takes five minutes' walk from the Prince Edward MTR Station. There are more than 40 shops selling fresh flowers from different parts of the world. The great variety of flowers sold attracts a lot of flower lovers like me. I usually go there in the late afternoon as flowers are getting even cheaper before the shops close.

## English Language Education

Taught the language items and structures required to show similarities and differences

- Used determiners (e.g., "each", "both" and "all") to talk about the items in comparison
- Used conjunctions to connect similar or opposing ideas (e.g. "and", "but")
- Used signal words (e.g. "like/unlike", "similar to/ different from")

Use signal words to show similarities and/or differences;

Signal words	To show similarities	To show differences
Prepositions/ Prepositional phrases:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Like Festival Walk, APM are shopping malls.</li> <li>2. Festival Walk is similar to APM in the number of shops provided.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Unlike Festival Walk, APM opens round the clock every day.</li> <li>2. The opening hours of Festival Walk are different from those of APM.</li> </ol>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Both Festival Walk and APM provide a wide variety of shops.</li> <li>2. Neither Festival Walk nor APM is located in the New Territories.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Festival Walk is situated in Kowloon Tong, whereas APM is in Kwun Tong.</li> <li>2. While Festival Walk closes before midnight, APM opens 24 hours a day.</li> </ol>

Use conjunctions to connect

same kind of things	different kinds of things
both	but
and	whereas
as well as	while
together with	yet

Make a comparison of wet markets and supermarkets and write a short essay

Basis of Comparison	Wet Markets	Supermarkets
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		

The Block Structure	The Point-by-Point Structure
(First introduce the similarities, then the differences, or vice versa.)	(Discuss points of comparison one by one.)
Introduction	Introduction
Similarities	1 <sup>st</sup> point of comparison
Differences	2 <sup>nd</sup> point of comparison
Conclusion	3 <sup>rd</sup> point of comparison
	Conclusion

## Improved students' writing skills when making comparisons

- Analysed the textual features of comparison essays
- Organised ideas for comparison using either Block Structure or Point-by-Point structure

How did the lives of poor Romans differ from the rich? Explain your answer by comparing their food and their homes.

## PSHE (History)

Fostered thinking language-content relationships in different content subjects through reading and/or writing

**Topic: The Ancient Roman Civilization**

**What was life like in Rome?**  
 A million people lived in Rome in 2,000. They were not crowded and well off. By 4,000, around 200,000 people were crammed and lived in free mass of barley bread, pork fat and oil of from the government.

**What were their homes like?**  
 Poor people lived in badly built apartment blocks without bathrooms or air-bricks. They used public baths and got hot food from food-shops. The houses of rich Romans had an open space, called atrium, with gardens to ground level. From the top floor, rich people often had big cool and entrance in country.

**What did people eat?**  
 Rich Romans ate food from local or overseas from Britain and Spain and their food with pepper from India or ginger from China. Sugar and carrots were known of but rarely eaten. Sheep and goats' milk was prepared to cook with. Poor people ate bread and oil.

**Who did all the work?**  
 Nearly one third of the population were slaves who did all the work. If they were allowed they might have a comfortable life as a farmer, shopkeeper, doctor, or musician with a wealthy family. However, farmers, labourers and miners had a hard life and usually died young.

**What entertainments were there?**  
 As slaves did most of the work, many Roman citizens had free time to relax. Like the Greeks they enjoyed the theatre and the circus. One day a gladiator would games which included chariot racing and combats in which gladiators fought to the death.

**How did people keep clean and healthy?**  
 All Roman cities had public baths, like modern hotels' cafeterias, where people could bathe and swim. Romans also enjoyed the baths to work out of the gymnasium, which included games or shot with friends and boy friends.

**What did the poor and rich Romans eat?**  
 The poor and the rich Romans had different kinds of food. The poor Romans ate bread, soup, they lived on food made of barley, the pork fat and olive oil. However, the rich Romans ate ham or oysters and spread that food with pepper or ginger. Rice, sugar and carrots were known of but rarely eaten. Sheep and goats' milk was prepared to cook with.

**How did the poor and rich Romans live?**  
 The poor and the rich Romans lived in different places. The poor Romans lived in badly built apartment blocks without bathrooms or kitchens. However, the rich Romans had an open place, called an atrium, with arcades to provide shade from the hot sun.

**Appropriate use of the signal words for comparison:**  
 The poor and the rich Romans had different kinds of food. The poor Romans ate bread, soup, they lived on food made of barley, the pork fat and olive oil. However, the rich Romans ate ham or oysters and spread that food with pepper or ginger. Rice, sugar and carrots were known of but rarely eaten. Sheep and goats' milk was prepared to cook with. Poor people ate bread and oil. The poor and the rich Romans lived in different places. The poor Romans lived in badly built apartment blocks without bathrooms or kitchens. However, the rich Romans had an open place, called an atrium, with arcades to provide shade from the hot sun. They often had big villas and estates in country.



## Impact

Most of the **students** came to realise the value of learning English to learn other content subjects. They found that integration of language and content was conducive to their learning although they still did not have the confidence in transferring the taught language skills to a variety of content subjects. Both language and subject teachers witnessed improvement in students' writing in terms of organisation (e.g. a point-by-point structure) and language skills (e.g. use of topic sentences and signal words in making comparison).

**The core team members** gained insight into the importance of holistic curriculum planning to develop a more coherent school-based curriculum and to expose students to a variety of learning contexts provided by teachers from different KLAs. Teachers involved in the project learned how to integrate language of the target KSs into their teaching modules and found that it addressed the needs of average students using English to learn the knowledge required for a variety of topics and themes in different subjects.

There was also a change in the perception of **some teachers** that joint efforts were needed to enhance students' learning. A growing number of subject and language teachers began to see a closer relationship between content and language. Some wanted to know more about how the subject teachers taught the planned materials in class. With support from the language teachers, some were willing to try to share the responsibilities of developing students' higher-order thinking and language skills through content area reading and writing in their own classrooms.

## Way forward

1. More systematic curriculum planning: move away from making connections to making coherence of what each KLA has done and extend the curriculum initiative from S1-2 to other level(s).
2. Stronger collaboration among teachers of different KLAs: move away from parallel work to collaborative work with mutual support among peers.
3. Enhanced thinking skills and language skills relating to the KSs in T/L: move from comprehension stage (e.g. finding out the similarities and differences of two objects) and application stages (e.g. reading and writing paragraphs of comparison with understanding of the textual features) to analytical and evaluation stage (e.g. develop criteria for comparison and making judgement or decision).



## Facilitating factors

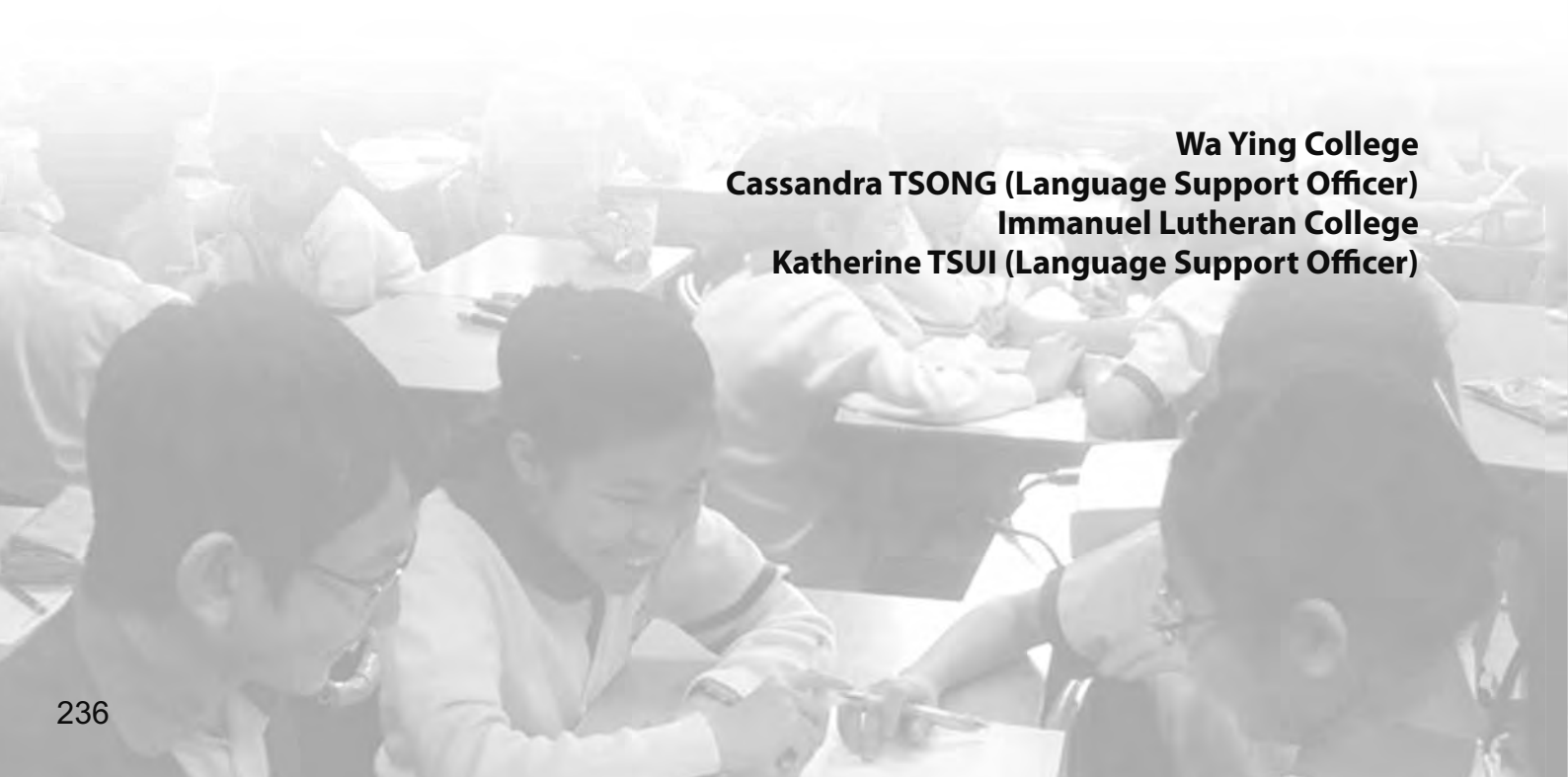
1. **Appointment of curriculum leader(s)** (e.g. Vice principal, School curriculum development co-ordinator, EMI co-ordinator) to oversee interdepartmental collaboration.
2. **Involvement of subject representatives** to try out new things themselves, motivate and mobilise panel members to work together on the project.
3. **Appropriate entry points** (e.g. reading strategies, knowledge structures) to organise cross-curricular curriculum and foster interdepartmental collaboration.
4. **A step-by-step approach** to whole-school curriculum development, progressing from smaller scale short-term plans (involving 1-2 subjects in one year level at a time for a specific purpose lasting for as short as 3-4 periods or 1-2 months) to bigger scale and longer-term plans (3-year plan involving subjects of different KLAs).
5. **Clear directions** of school development, **well-defined roles of teachers** in collaboration and **shared responsibilities** among teachers in contributing to and supporting students' learning.

## Conclusion

Successful cross-curricular planning can bring many benefits to the English teachers, subject teachers and students. Yet it is important to bear in mind that whichever mode of collaboration the school has chosen, teachers must make sure that they have enough time for planning. Do not jump into the task right away and also make sure the task is manageable for all parties. Think big but start small and you will find the road to collaboration is not so rough after all.

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# Diverse ways to fit diverse learning needs

## Background


Like many other local schools, teachers in this school are faced with the challenge of catering for learner diversity. To cope with the challenge, teachers have tried using graded exercises in streamed classes. However, they are aware that graded exercises should not be the only measure to handle learner differences as the range of diversity increases in some year levels. In P5, teachers noticed that the brightest class was far more advanced than the other two weaker classes, so they found it difficult to provide extra help to the less able classes and extend the learning of the more able class by merely including graded exercises in the same curriculum. Teachers therefore are eager to explore different strategies that can be applied in classes of learners with varied needs, abilities, motivation levels and learning styles.

## Level

P5

## Strategies and implementation details

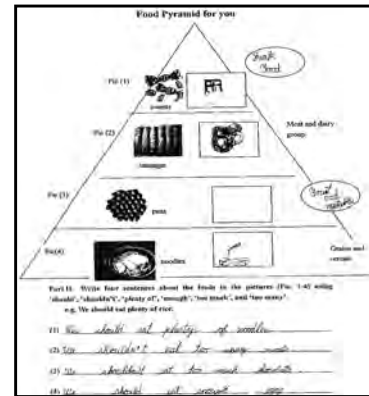
To enable classes of diverse learners to learn more effectively, various strategies were tried out in a module “Healthy Eating” which was adapted from two coursebook units “Eating Habits” and “Advice on Eating”.



Strategy used and rationale	Implementation detail
<p><b>Adapt the curriculum</b> to enable learners to learn at their level and pace that suit them best</p>	<p><b>Set core and extended learning content for different instructional groupings:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Taught the stronger class the core and extended food vocabulary together with the strategy of compounding nouns to increase the range of topic vocabulary that students had to learn but targeted the core word list only in the weaker class</li><li>• Taught all classes the concept of “food pyramid” covered in the textbook while expanded on the concept “a balanced lunch” in the stronger class through a supplementary text adapted from an authentic government leaflet</li></ul> <div data-bbox="1075 1294 1445 1570"></div> <p data-bbox="1075 1585 1445 1644">A word compounding game for the stronger class</p>

**Provide learners with different tasks** to match their stage of progress

**Designed varied activities/tasks for varied classes** to achieve different aims:

- Asked students in the weaker classes to describe their classmates' food pyramid using the vocabulary about "food groups" and the quantity words "plenty of", "too much", "too many" and "enough", giving students further practice to reinforce their learning of the core language items covered in one unit
- Required the stronger class to evaluate whether the lunchboxes on the menus were healthy or not using the additional knowledge acquired in class, enabling students to pursue the topic in greater depth and make connections across what they learned in the two units



Lunchbox A	Lunchbox B	Reasons for the Choice
<input type="checkbox"/> Rice with sweet corn, pork, and white cabbage 	<input type="checkbox"/> Jumbo sausages, burgers with sweet corn and mashed potato 	We should choose Lunchbox ____ First, Second, Third.

**Provide all learners with the same task but vary the instructional support in the learning process** to give sufficient preparation and assistance

**Gave more input to help the weaker classes** complete the food riddle guessing task which required students to draw on their new and previous knowledge about food names:

- Used an extra matching activity, focussing on the target "old" words to bridge any gaps in students' knowledge before presenting the new vocabulary

**Used graded exercises in the weaker classes to allow students to proceed at different levels of support:**

Developed two graded versions of the same task sheet for the food diary information-gap activity to familiarise students of varied abilities with the structures "fewer .....than", "less .....than" and "more .....than":

- Included more clues and guidance in the easier version at the beginning and less at the end, helping the struggling learners to take increasing responsibility for their own learning

1. Amy had less orange juice on Sunday than on Saturday.  
 2. Amy had fewer crackers on Friday than on Sunday.  
 3. Amy had more water on Friday than on Sunday.  
 4. Amy had more chocolate on Saturday than on Friday and Sunday.

Excerpt of the exercise

- Gave more open-ended instructions in the challenging version, allowing more flexibility in the exercise to stretch the stronger students

Part II) Write five sentences to talk about the snacks Amy had last week: two sentences using 'fewer than', two sentences using 'less than' and one sentence using 'more than'.  
 E.g. Amy had more apples on Saturday than on Friday.  
 1. Amy had less chocolate on Sunday than on Saturday.  
 2. Amy had more ice cream on Saturday than on Sunday.  
 3. Amy had fewer sausages on Saturday than on Sunday.

Excerpt of the exercise

Use formative assessment to inform adjustment in teaching

Adopted a game approach to designing a formative assessment activity to diagnose students' needs and assist students in making progress in the learning of countable and uncountable nouns:

- Required students to do different actions to show if the nouns were countable ("Stand up" for "Countable noun"; "Cross one's arms" for "Uncountable noun"; "Scratch one's head" for "Unsure answer") to check students' understanding in a non-threatening environment




- Observed and analysed the class learning performance to decide on the follow-up actions in the subsequent lessons
- Retought the language point using an adjusted teaching approach in the weaker classes to help students overcome their weaknesses but proceeded to the next teaching point in the stronger class where no major learning difficulties were spotted

**Uncountable nouns**

Things we cannot count

- cannot put "s" on them
- cannot use "a", "an" or "1,2,3 ..." before them
- followed by singular verbs only (e.g. is)

e.g.



a/ one salt ✗  
three salts ✗

(fewer food items as examples)

**Powder: Too small to count**



½ salt ✗



½ sugar ✗



½ pepper ✗



½ curry powder ✗




Modified ways of presentation

Employ a variety of teaching methods to increase learning motivation and to suit learners of different needs, interests, learning styles and abilities

Used different questions to develop students' readiness and nurture motivation through giving them a sense of success during the class discussion on a story about healthy eating:

- Posed different types of questions, ranging from factual questions like "What foods did Ian eat?" to interpretive questions such as "What do you think about the character, Ian?" and encouraged students to build on one another's answers to enable all students of different ability ranges in class to hear and learn from a wide range of responses.
- Targetted the challenging questions at the stronger students first, then the weaker students and offered them assistance in the process by providing linguistic cues, for instance, giving the weaker students some options of adjectives to consider when asking them to comment on the main character.

**Varied teaching methods to cater for different learning styles:**

Learner style catered	Teaching approach
Visual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Displayed the target food vocabulary with pictures on the classroom notice boards for students to refer to during the class activities in the module</li> <li>• Showed a diagram to graphically illustrate the differences in quantities when introducing the quantity words</li> </ul>  
Kinesthetic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invited students to put the food cards in the correct layers of the food pyramid while introducing the concept of a balanced diet</li> </ul>
Analytical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Created mnemonics to help students store and retrieve the target food words</li> </ul> <div data-bbox="746 1151 1350 1312" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>f is for the food at Mcdonald's <u>f</u> <u>a</u> <u>s</u> <u>t</u> <u>f</u> <u>e</u> <u>e</u> <u>d</u></p> <p>g is for a small purple fruit <u>g</u> <u>r</u> <u>a</u> <u>p</u> <u>e</u> ✓</p> <p>h is for an American fast food <u>h</u> <u>a</u> <u>m</u> <u>b</u> <u>u</u> <u>r</u> <u>g</u> <u>e</u> <u>r</u> ✓</p> <p>i is for a cold sweet food made from milk <u>i</u> <u>c</u> <u>e</u> - <u>c</u> <u>r</u> <u>e</u> <u>a</u> <u>m</u> ✓</p> </div> <p style="text-align: center;">Excerpt of the mnemonics used</p>
Auditory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Built in more information-gap activities to create an authentic need among students to communicate</li> <li>• Played music while students were working and used a song as input</li> </ul>
Concrete	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Included group work and cooperative learning activities to foster interaction among students</li> </ul>  <p style="text-align: center;">“Healthy eating” poster done in group</p>

<p><b>Provide all learners with the same task/ exercises but vary the output</b> to create challenging learning experiences</p>	<p><b>Expected different levels of performance from different classes</b> in the advice letter writing task:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Required the weaker classes to suggest general advice on healthy eating</li> <li>• Required the stronger class to recommend a healthy lunchbox in addition to giving advice</li> </ul> <div data-bbox="477 439 1433 654" data-label="Image"> </div> <p>An example recommendation made by the stronger class</p>
<p><b>Promote learner autonomy</b> to arouse motivation and to pace learning according to learners' abilities</p>	<p><b>Allowed choices in the learning outcome</b> of the poster design task by asking individual students in class to choose the levels of challenge they wanted to work at while creating the rhyming slogans about healthy eating</p> <div data-bbox="445 864 928 958" data-label="Image"> </div> <p>Easier level (Complete the given slogan)</p> <div data-bbox="954 848 1444 969" data-label="Image"> </div> <p>Challenging level (Produce a new slogan)</p>

## Impact

- **Teachers' repertoire of strategies to cater for learner diversity has expanded** as a result of the try-outs to adjust their teaching through differentiating the learning content, instructional strategies as well as expectations of the learning outcome in the module. They realised that designing graded exercises is just one of the many approaches to meeting students' diverse needs.
- From teachers' observations, students responded well to the adjusted curriculum. For example, **students' efficiency of learning has improved**. Teachers noticed that students in the weaker classes could remember the target food vocabulary better with the use of mnemonics and made remarkable progress in learning countable and uncountable nouns through strategic reteaching whereas those in the stronger class learned more knowledge and skills beyond the textbook curriculum in the same module. Besides, **students' motivation and interest increased** because of the "variety" in the module. For instance, it was found that students, especially those in the stronger class, were eager to challenge themselves by working beyond the basic task requirement. Instead of attempting one slogan at one particular level of performance as expected, some students produced two slogans at more than one level of challenge.



## Facilitating factors

- The **strategic deployment of the PSM(CD) and an ex-P5 teacher in the co-planning process** has greatly facilitated the process of differentiating teaching as it has taken advantage of the PSM(CD)s rich knowledge about brain-based teaching and the ex-P5 teacher's practical experiences of teaching the year level in the last school year. Their involvement has enabled the P5 English teachers of the current school year to adapt the curriculum and teaching approaches more appropriately for effective teaching and learning.
- **The school principal's full support** in giving allowance for trimming down the textbook materials has created ample space for the differentiated curriculum.
- **The teachers' willingness to make changes and their flexibility in managing change** has encouraged them to continually make adjustment to their teaching in response to students' learning needs.

## Way forward

A gradual approach has been adopted to align the mainstream curriculum with the curriculum for the remedial class held outside normal school hours to help the struggling learners to master the target language step by step with a sense of achievement. For instance, the remedial class completed an easier exercise before doing a difficult one in the regular class. In the future, more attempts like this can be made to cater for diversity at the **curriculum planning level** as teachers gain more confidence in using the differentiation strategies at the classroom level.

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**Peggy TSANG (Language Support Officer)**

## Helping dyslexic students learn English at Key Stage 2

### Background

This school supports students who need intensive individual attention on their learning and social development. The English teachers have had some experience in tailoring teaching objectives and materials for the students over the past years. However, they think that much is needed to be done to support the students with special learning difficulties such as dyslexia. Three upper primary teachers launched a two-year project examining the teaching of students with dyslexia at P4 and P5 levels.

### Levels

P4-5

### Strategies used

When the project commenced in 2006, teachers reported that P4 students were weak in learning many subjects, especially in English language. The teachers found some students had serious difficulties in writing and spelling and were reluctant to read English texts. Some liked speaking but many were not motivated and could not concentrate on listening to the teachers' instructions. These may be features of dyslexia. "Dyslexia" means "difficulty with words" and is sometimes known as "word blindness". With the support of the Language Learning Support Section, the school carried out a project on catering for the needs of these students when learning English. The strategies adopted were:

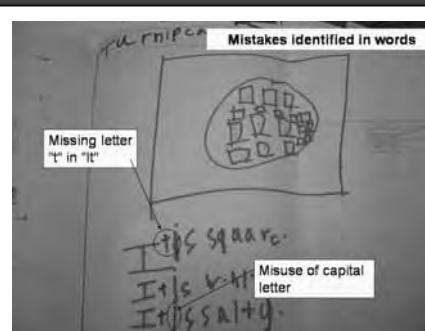
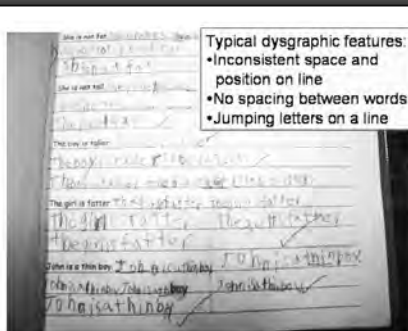
- To increase teachers' understanding of the typical behaviour and the learning problems of dyslexic learners so that they can modify the curriculum and instruction to suit their needs.
- To closely monitor the learning progress of dyslexic learners, e.g. keeping learning portfolios and collecting student work to keep track of progress.
- To emphasise enhancing learning motivation in planning the curriculum.

### What happened

#### Stage 1: Diagnosis (Sept.- Nov. 2006)

To identify the dyslexic features of students, teachers collected information from student work, daily classroom observation, and two diagnostic language tests.

#### 1. Sample mistakes of dysgraphia found in student work

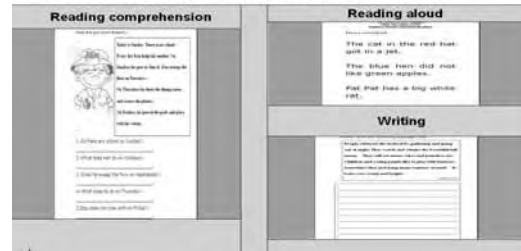


## 2. Diagnostic Tests

(i) **LAMK:** a battery of tests provided by the Special Education Section for early identification of learning difficulties in students

(ii) **School assessment test:** developed collaboratively with Language Learning Support Section

### English Language Assessment (Reading & Writing) Oct. 2006



(iii) **Using classroom observation:** Writing, reading comprehension, and reading aloud were chosen for observation of dyslexic features. The teachers used a checklist as reference and entered the information in student learning portfolios. The list was developed after a selective literature review of dyslexia and English language teaching.

### (iv) Action after diagnosis: Keeping student portfolios

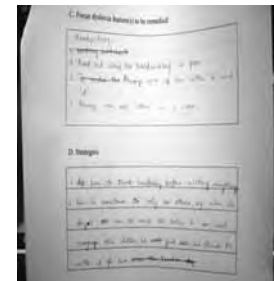
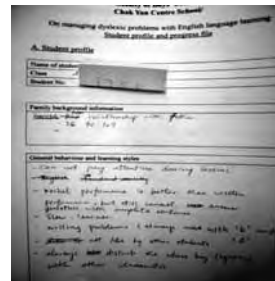
Five students were chosen as focus students. To avoid missing any potential cases, the teachers kept learning portfolios on all students. Samples of focus students:

#### Teddy

- Quiet and alone, willing to learn on his own, unable to write a sentence or even English letters, speaking test results poor.

#### Kenneth

- Well behaved, weak in listening and spelling, no directionality – letters “b” and “d” reversed, poor at reading.



A learning portfolio records a student’s personal information, his family background, his dyslexic features and school work.

The portfolio is also a reflective log for teachers. Teachers identified the problems of the focus students and planned some strategies to help the students learn better.

An extract of a teacher’s reflection in a student portfolio is shown on the right.

### Dyslexic features to be remedied:

#### Handwriting:

- Confusing the letters “b” and “d”
- Omitting letters in a word
- Poor handwriting

#### Strategies:

Kenneth sometimes relies on others, e.g. when he sometimes forgets how to write the letter “b” or can’t recognise the letter, he just asks his friend to write it for him. Will ask him to think carefully before writing anything.



## Stage 2: Remediation and Modification in action (Nov. 2006 – Jun. 2008)

After identifying the dyslexic features of their students, which included poor short-term memory and attention span, weak spelling and writing skills and weakness in sequencing and organising information (Levine, 1984; Root, 1994; Peer, 2000; Turner & Pughe, 2003), teachers decided to try out special teaching techniques to enhance students' learning motivation, and improve their writing skills.

Examples of task modification and teaching techniques used in the project:

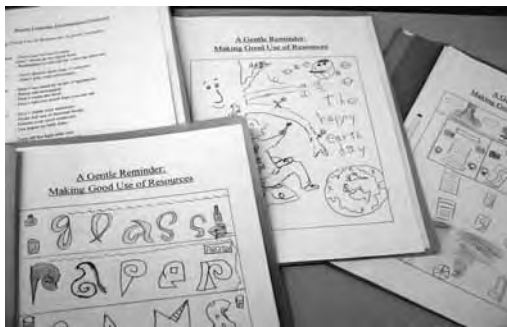
### 1. Enhancing the learning motivation of students

#### (i) Tapping students' multiple intelligences

##### (a) Adding pictures to one's writing

Some dyslexic students are good at drawing. In most of the writing activities, the teachers let students add pictures or art work to their work.

e.g. Project: A Gentle Reminder on Environmental Protection

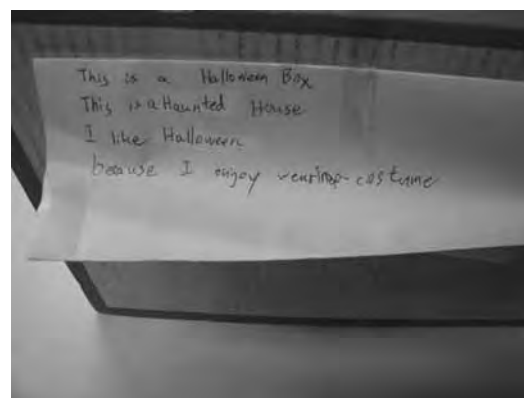


##### (b) Model making: Making Festival Stalls and making a short presentation to the class



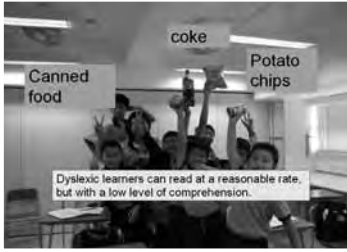
Some dyslexic learners can do well in oral reading. The students were allowed to paste a short introduction to the back of the box (below). This helped them read aloud without the need to memorise the sentences when they were holding the box during their presentation.

e.g. Fish bookmarks: My resolution in the new school year



## (ii) Adopting a multi-sensory approach to help some dyslexic learners

In this unit on "Shopping", the teacher brought along real objects to the classroom. Through seeing and touching or even tasting the foods, students were able to remember the meaning of some words.

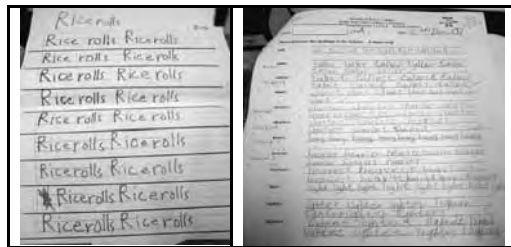


As well as realia, other examples of a multi-sensory approach to learning include learning kits, PowerPoint, etc. to strengthen the audio and visual impact of the teaching content and to involve students in games which appeal to their five senses in physical activities.

## 2. Adopting special techniques to help the students improve their handwriting and writing skills

### (i) Providing individual tutorials to improve the mastering of English letters

To help the students write English letters accurately, teachers taught after school tutorials using copy books and worksheets. Penmanship worksheets were at times printed on A3 size sheets for the students.



### (ii) Varying the task demands and expected language outcomes

Teachers used a unit on "Changes at home", in order to facilitate students' understanding of the text type of "manual". To cater for the low comprehension ability of the students, the teachers produced a 3-fold manual leaflet for the students to draw and write about how to keep pets.

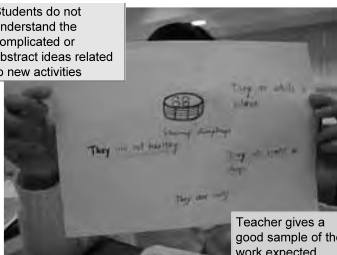
Less able students including the dyslexic learners were allowed to write one single sentence only for each picture. The more able ones could write more.



### (iii) Providing a real example of a finished product for writing tasks

The teachers found that their students particularly the dyslexic students could not comprehend verbal instructions effectively. They usually provided a real example of the writing output as the students found it easier to process pictorial information.

Students do not understand the complicated or abstract ideas related to new activities



Teacher gives a good sample of the work expected from the students

A sample menu shown to the class



A finished menu prepared by a group

#### (iv) Assessment for learning: changing the mode of response to dictation

Instead of using the conventional form of dictation (i.e. teacher reading aloud words and phrases for students to listen to and write down in their book), the teachers provided some sentences containing words of similar spelling or some distractors. Students listened to the teacher and circled the words they heard. In this way, the mode of response was changed and students found it manageable to listen to and recognise the target words instead of spelling the words themselves. To distinguish between two words is already a challenge for the dyslexic students.

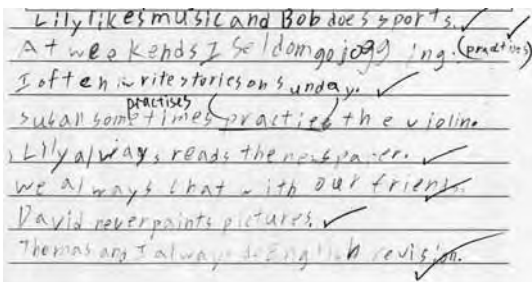


## Progress

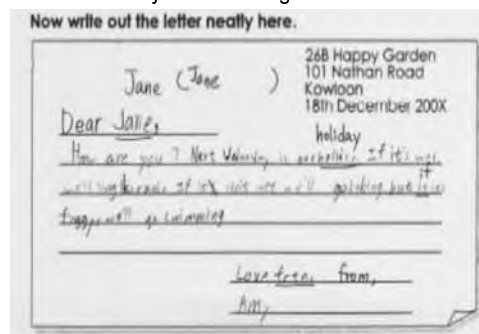
### ➤ On focus students

The students made different degrees of progress in their learning. The teachers found that students improved more noticeably in mastering English letters and their handwriting was legible. The case of Teddy is a good example. But like some other weak students, he still cannot handle cursive writing.

Teddy's handwriting in 2006-07



Teddy's handwriting in 2007-08



Kenneth was found to be very weak in English and did not take the initiative to learn. His motivation to learn improved to some extent. He likes writing lines and sometimes even asks teachers for extra exercises.

On the whole, with modification of task demand, provision of samples, adjustment of assessment format etc., the students could complete pieces of writing well: restaurant menus, bookmarks, pet keeping manuals, project work, and invitation letters. They could also present their work briefly to their fellow students. With satisfaction gained through completing English tasks, the joy of working collaboratively with other students, and the praise of teachers for their work, many students had greater learning motivation after the two years. It is good to learn from Teddy's P6 English teacher this year that he has taken the initiative to use a dictionary to check the meaning of words related to sports after watching a movie on basketball.



### ➤ **Teachers' reflection**

Teachers' efforts are always worthwhile even though not all students show the same progress. Teachers found that they knew more about how to help students and gained more confidence in addressing the needs of the dyslexic students.

The mistakes identified in student work became a kind of data pool which will be used to set a diagnostic test in the new school year. The students' learning portfolios kept by the teachers will also be kept for reference by other teachers who teach these students in the following years.

## **Facilitating factors**

The project succeeded in enriching the knowledge and skills of the teachers in analysing the needs of their dyslexic students and devising teaching materials and techniques. The crucial facilitating factor is the school's committed support for students' special needs in learning and social development. In a supportive school environment, teachers can introduce change to the teaching content and flexibly allocate resources for teaching. Another important factor is the small class size set-up of this school. Teachers could give intensive attention to individual students inside and outside the classroom and render necessary language and pastoral support to them.

## **Difficulties and suggestions**

It is never easy for a teacher to teach a second language to students of different abilities in one class. It is even more challenging for a teacher to address the needs of dyslexic students. In the project, the teachers gained an initial understanding of dyslexia. They still needed to take part in formal training courses or workshops to enrich their knowledge of dyslexia. Apart from human resources, teaching resources on catering for the dyslexic needs are also important for the school. More funding can be allocated to purchase learning kits and tools for meeting particular dyslexic needs, and subscribing to magazines relating to support for dyslexic students for the professional development of teachers.

"Dyslexia" is one of the many types of learner diversity in education. With sufficient understanding of the needs of dyslexic students and more experience in planning and delivery, teachers who are assigned to teach dyslexic students should be able to help them learn with progress and satisfaction.

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