

Preparing students for the New Senior Secondary electives through strategic mapping of the junior secondary curriculum

Background

With the introduction of the New Senior Secondary (NSS) curriculum, teachers are concerned about how to help students prepare for the new academic requirements. A unique feature of the NSS curriculum is the introduction of eight elective modules in which different forms of language arts and non-language arts texts are used as a medium for teaching and learning English. Teachers from St Louis School aim to better prepare students for this change by laying a solid foundation for their students in their junior years of schooling through the strategic infusion of language arts and non-language arts components into the junior secondary English Language curriculum. Some basic yet essential knowledge and skills required in the elective modules that the school is likely to offer in the NSS curriculum have been mapped out and infused into S1, S2 and S3, with each level focussing on one or two of the modules. In mapping the curriculum vertically and horizontally, the school is able to secure for their students a smoother transition to the NSS English Language curriculum.

Levels

S1, S2, S3

Strategies used

1. Developing a progressive development plan

To facilitate the junior secondary curriculum development, a road map for a three-year development programme was set out as follows:

Focus	Sub-focus	Time	Target	Focus of work
Preparation for the NSS electives to be offered	Short Stories	Year 1	S1	➤ Developing S1 modules through infusing knowledge and skills related to short stories
	Pop Culture	Year 2	S1 S2	➤ Developing S2 modules through infusing pop culture ➤ Refining the S1 modules
	Social Issues & Debating	Year 3	S1 S2 S3	➤ Developing S3 modules through infusing social issues and debating ➤ Refining the S1 and S2 modules

The 3-year development plan aimed to infuse relevant skills and knowledge related to various NSS electives into modules in S1, S2 and S3 in a systematic and progressive manner. It not only enabled teachers to focus on developing a specific area each year, but also allowed teachers to review the modules taught so that the attainment of vertical and horizontal continuity in the English curriculum could be ensured.

2. Conducting systematic curriculum mapping

As one of the main tasks was to infuse the skills and knowledge required in various elective modules into the junior secondary curriculum, teachers reviewed the modules in the textbooks to see if there was room for integrating language arts and non-language arts elements. Some basic yet essential skills related to various modules were identified and integrated into different modules across S1 to S3. Learning tasks and activities suggested in the textbooks were refined or replaced by some more suitable ones. In doing so, a more balanced coverage of the learning targets and learning objectives could be achieved.

3. Developing learning modules through strategic integration

Learning modules were developed through integrating the identified skills and knowledge and various print and non-print materials into textbook units. A wide variety of language arts materials like narratives, poems and songs and non-language arts texts like magazine articles and expository texts was infused into suitable modules. A task-based approach was adopted and reading was integrated with other language skills through purposeful tasks and activities. Students were provided with a meaningful context to integrate the four skills in the learning process.

4. Placing emphasis on the teaching of reading

Since good reading skills can open up opportunities for learning, it is of great importance to help students build a firm foundation in reading. Therefore, emphasis was placed on the explicit teaching of reading strategies in the first year of the programme. Students were taught how to apply reading strategies to read and interact with narratives in depth. Other reading strategies needed for the NSS curriculum were also infused into the junior secondary curriculum, where the teaching of text structures and the teaching of text features in a range of text types were strengthened and reinforced. The diagram below shows an example of how the teaching of different texts, reading skills and text features was organised based on one or two elective modules in each year:

	S1	S2	S3
Elective to be prepared	Short Stories	Pop Culture	Social Issues Debating
Text infused	narratives	pop-culture texts	expository texts and debates
Reading skill and strategy needed: Noticing text structure	<i>story structure:</i> setting/characters rising action/ problem climax resolution / outcome	<i>text structure of pop-culture texts:</i> sequence text structure of film review	<i>text structure of expository texts:</i> cause and effect problem and solution
Distinctive text feature	use of dialogues use of temporal connectives	use of formal (e.g. editorials) and informal language (e.g. captions)	effective use of discourse markers use of rhetorical devices

What happened

A number of modules were developed in S1, S2 and S3 progressively over the past three years. One featured learning activity was planned at each level to help students further develop and apply the skills and knowledge acquired throughout the year in an integrated manner. Some of the modules and the featured learning activities are illustrated here:

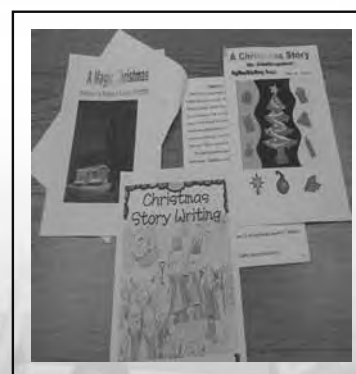
S1 (2006-2007)

Elective focus: Short Stories

Examples of learning activities to develop skills and knowledge	Core language skills and grammar items covered	Skills and knowledge related to the elective focus
<p><u>Module on Christmas (1st term)</u> Students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ read the story "A Brother Like That" and the reader "A Christmas Carol". ➢ learned reading strategies explicitly. ➢ analysed story plots using a graphic organiser. ➢ compared different characters in the stories. ➢ responded to the scenes and characters in the stories. ➢ wrote a script for a scene and acted the scene out. ➢ conducted discussions about the characters and story development. ➢ wrote a reflection on the story and gave individual presentations. ➢ wrote a story about Christmas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Past tense ➢ Vocabulary for characterisation ➢ Speaking verbs ➢ Reading skills and strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prediction • Visualisation • Making connections • Making inferences • Identifying main ideas and specific information • 3Rs: relating, reflecting, and responding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Features of print fiction texts - elements of a story plot: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • setting • characters • theme • message ➢ Characterisation ➢ Use of narrator's voice ➢ Use of dialogues ➢ Use of descriptive language

Featured learning activity of the year: Process writing project

Teachers guided students to rewrite and polish their stories using a process writing approach throughout the second term, focussing on different techniques students had learned in creating stories, for example, how to revise the plot development, climax, opening and ending of the story, and how to enrich the story by using dialogues and characterisation and more effective language. Students engaged in self-assessment, peer-assessment and rewriting activities to produce their final products.



Process writing projects



Students staging a fashion show



Student work: group magazines

Examples of learning activities to develop skill and knowledge	Core language skills and grammar items covered	Skills and knowledge related to the elective focus
<p><u>Module on movies (1st term)</u> Students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ read a magazine article about different kinds of movies. ➤ conducted an interview with classmates about their favourite movies and wrote an “answer man” section. ➤ designed a crossword puzzle about movies. ➤ viewed and analysed a movie. ➤ discussed different elements of the movie. ➤ read and analysed film reviews. ➤ wrote a film review giving a personal opinion. ➤ did self and peer assessment on the film review. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Present perfect and past perfect tense ➤ Adverbs ➤ Adjectives ➤ Language and vocabulary for describing different types of movies ➤ Language for conducting an interview ➤ Useful expressions and phrases for giving comments ➤ Reading skills and strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>read around the text</i> • <i>text structure of non-fiction</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Genres of movies ➤ Features of film reviews: elements of a film – e.g. <i>plot, setting, characters, theme, message</i> ➤ Features of crossword puzzles ➤ Features of an “answer man” section ➤ Self-assessment and peer assessment on a film review ➤ Expressing points of view and supplying evidence when writing reviews ➤ Creativity and critical thinking skills
<p><u>Module on fashion (2nd term)</u> Students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ read about fashion trends. ➤ discussed and described different fashion items and fashion trends. ➤ watched a video clip of a fashion show staged by other students. ➤ discussed how to prepare for a fashion show including a theme and division of labour. ➤ wrote commentary scripts for the fashion show. ➤ designed outfits for the show. ➤ staged a fashion show and presented their fashion items. ➤ took photos in the fashion show and wrote photo captions. ➤ gave feedback on their classmates’ performance. ➤ reflected on the learning experiences of staging a fashion show. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Comparison of adjectives ➤ Adjective order ➤ Passive voice ➤ Language and vocabulary for describing fashion items ➤ Language and structures for writing captions (e.g. <i>appositives, prepositions of place and time</i>) ➤ Language for writing commentary scripts ➤ Presentation skills (e.g. <i>use of voice, gestures</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Features of photo captions ➤ Features of and language used in a commentary ➤ Using persuasive language to present fashion items ➤ Presentation skills in a fashion show ➤ Peer assessment on presentation skills ➤ Creativity ➤ Communication and collaboration

Featured learning activity of the year: Group magazine project

Students worked in groups to produce a magazine on a topic related to pop culture by selecting and compiling some good work they did in various modules throughout the year such as film reviews, word puzzles and photo captions. They also wrote a featured article based on their chosen theme and designed the cover and contents page. Students learned how to create graphics to enhance the impact of texts in their magazines and how different elements like language, format, styles and target audience come into play in producing a magazine.

Examples of learning activities to develop skills and knowledge	Core language skills and grammar items covered	Components related to the elective focus
<p>Module on Environment (1st term) Students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ watched a movie about global warming. ➢ responded to the characters and scenes in the movie. ➢ discussed the causes and effects of environmental problems using graphic organisers. ➢ responded to issues related to global warming and environmental problems. ➢ read and responded to expository texts on environmental issues. ➢ read and wrote poems on environmental issues. ➢ designed photo captions about the tree issue in Hong Kong. ➢ held a forum on how to reduce environmental problems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Past and present participles ➢ Language for identifying cause and effect ➢ Presenting different perspectives ➢ Grouping ideas ➢ Giving reasons (e.g. <i>since, so that</i>) ➢ Giving evidence and examples ➢ Reading strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>text structure of cause and effect</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Identifying causal relationships in ideas ➢ Viewing issues from different perspectives ➢ Giving reasons to support one's point of view ➢ Identifying and grouping similar or different ideas (e.g. <i>pros & cons / using evidence and examples</i>) ➢ Identifying problems and giving solutions ➢ Using different mind maps to organise and present ideas ➢ Critical thinking and problem-solving skills
<p>Module on Charity (2nd term) Students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ learned about different charities. ➢ read expository texts about SPCA killing rescued dogs. ➢ learned what "obvious" fallacies are. ➢ learned the basic set-up of a debate. ➢ learned how to make simple rebuttals. ➢ read and analysed a debate speech. ➢ reviewed how to view issues from different perspectives using a graphic organiser. ➢ had discussions about an issue on voluntary work. ➢ wrote speeches for a mini-debate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Adjective + to ➢ Adjectives + that ➢ "If" conditionals ➢ Language for formulating arguments ➢ Making rebuttals or giving counter-arguments ➢ Revision of language for expressing causal relationships ➢ Reading and writing skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>use of topic sentences and supporting details</i> • <i>text structure of an argumentative essay</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Formulating arguments ➢ Making rebuttals/giving counter-arguments with reasons and evidence ➢ Understanding "obvious" fallacies (e.g. <i>over-generalisation, personal attack</i>) ➢ Distinguishing between fact and opinion ➢ Basic set up and rules of debating ➢ Writing debate speeches ➢ Critical thinking and problem-solving skills

* Implemented in two pilot classes in S3

Featured learning activity of the year: Mini-debate

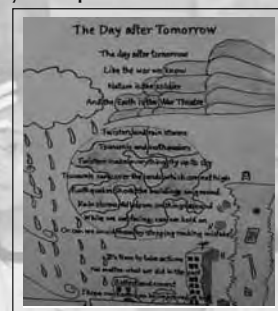
A mini-debate was planned for students to further develop and use previously acquired skills such as the use of delivery and persuasion strategies and critical thinking skills. The debate will be held in June after all the modules have been covered and students will work in groups to prepare arguments and write speeches for the debate.



Photo caption of the tree issue



Students discussing a social issue in a news article



Poem created by students in response to global warming



Impact

1. On students

Through engaging in different activities and tasks linked to various elective modules, students have **gained a wider range of learning experiences**. Teachers realise that students have also developed skills and knowledge related to some electives. For example, students have clearer ideas about different elements in stories like setting, characters and plot. Having acquired the basic skills and knowledge in the junior forms, students can move more smoothly on the road to the NSS curriculum.

2. On teachers

Teachers have gained experience in curriculum mapping and putting new teaching ideas into practice, thus enhancing the interface between the junior secondary curriculum and the NSS curriculum. This project has provided them with **more insight into how to approach the electives and try out a less textbook bound curriculum**. They have also gained a better understanding of student learning through conducting a range of learning activities with students. They have come up with more ideas to refine and modify activities to better cater for students' needs.


3. On curriculum

Continuous effort in curriculum mapping for the past three years has led to **improved curriculum continuity and coherence between junior and senior forms**. Through strategic integration, the existing junior secondary English curriculum is more relevant to the needs of students who are moving into the NSS curriculum. The junior curriculum has also become **more diversified** - one that provides more room for students to develop generic skills such as creativity, collaboration and communication skills through a broader range of learning activities. Apart from these, the curriculum is now less textbook driven, and there is more space for teachers to integrate what they think is beneficial to students' learning in the curriculum.

Facilitating factors

The English panel head is **proactive in managing curriculum change**. He shared his vision with other teachers, giving them the courage to cope with the challenges ahead. Apart from closely monitoring the progress of the development plan, he participated in the collaborative lesson planning meetings to facilitate exchange of ideas and was involved in material design and lesson planning. He also took the initiative to teach at the junior levels so as to understand more about the difficulties teachers might encounter and rendered appropriate support to them. Without his **devotion to curriculum development and improvement**, the implementation of the progressive plan would have been impossible.

The work and effort of the teachers who took part in the collaboration also facilitated the implementation of the development plan. The teachers of the working group **were not intimidated by the idea of developing a less textbook driven curriculum**. They set aside their free time for collaborative lesson planning meetings and were willing to try out new teaching ideas. They also paired up to write and revise teaching plans and materials after the modules were taught and reviewed.



To think big but start small has proven to be a good strategy to cope with curriculum change. The ultimate goal of the development plan is to **achieve holistic curriculum integration** at the junior levels, but the progressive nature of the plan allowed teachers to work on one specific focus area in each year, and reviewed the work done previously and developed a new focus area the next year. This reduced teachers' workload in addressing all the challenges at one go. This also made possible the **systematic infusion of input and progressive development of knowledge and skills** in various modules.

Implications for teaching, learning and curriculum development

1. Introducing Planning-Implementation-Evaluation (PIE) cycle

In developing a school-based curriculum, it is wrong to view planning, implementation, and evaluation as linear processes. The PIE cycle should be in place and the processes involved should be linked. Teachers need to review what has been planned and implemented and then reflect on what should be refined and improved in preparation for a new cycle of planning, implementation and evaluation. Through using effective evaluation tools like in-depth analysis of instructional materials and students' work, teachers can get insightful ideas to start a new cycle of planning - how to refine what to teach, when to teach and how to teach the curriculum.

2. Building of curriculum leaders and collaborative culture

To facilitate curriculum development, the encouragement of curriculum leaders who are equipped with a broad base of knowledge in curriculum and pedagogy and committed to improving teaching and learning effectiveness is an important step to take. As a teacher's role today is no longer confined to teaching, teachers should be empowered to take up the role of curriculum leaders. It is important for schools to identify potential leaders and provide them with opportunities for capacity building. It is also vital to nurture a reflective and sharing culture among teachers so that their capacity can be built up by working on collective wisdom.

3. Support from the school management

Reforming the curriculum to pave the way for a smoother transition to the new academic structure is a worthy endeavor but a challenging one. It entails more than teachers' enthusiasm about teaching and professional knowledge in the subject. Schools need to create space and time for teacher collaboration, provide support to boost the morale of teachers and tap into resources to facilitate the implementation of the PIE model. Without support from the school management, the achievements and progress made will not be easily sustained.

Reference

Curriculum Development Council and Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (2007). English Language Education KLA: English Language Curriculum and Assessment Guide (S4-6). HKSARG: The Education and Manpower Bureau.

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Enhancing students' motivation for learning English and preparing them for the New Senior Secondary curriculum

Background

In order to enhance their students' motivation for learning English, as well as to better prepare them for the NSS, the English teachers of Kowloon Tong School (Secondary Section) decided to develop some theme-based modules for the junior forms in which suitable language arts and non-language arts materials were selected to widen their students' exposure to a more creative and innovative way of learning and using English.

Level

S2

Strategies used

The design of the modules is founded on the following guiding principles underpinning the NSS with emphasis put especially on the following areas:

1. Learner-centred practices

As "students learn most effectively when teachers treat them as the focus of attention" (English Language Curriculum and Assessment Guide, 2007), it was decided to:

- (i) choose and design the themes, learning tasks and activities with the students' interests and experiences in mind;
- (ii) create ample opportunities for group and pair work for genuine communication in the lessons;
- (iii) design the tasks in the modules focussing on encouraging creativity and the integrative use of English;
- (iv) teach grammar in context; and
- (v) provide rubrics to students which can help them accomplish the work on their own and become more conscientious and purposeful in using what they have learned in the lessons.

2. Integrating the knowledge and skills for the NSS elective modules into existing practices

The design of the modules includes practices already in the S2 curriculum:

- (i) the inclusion of short stories in the formal curriculum to help students develop the skills and knowledge required for the NSS Short Story Elective module; and
- (ii) the introduction of literature circles to enhance students' abilities in appreciating short stories and to strengthen their speaking skills for School-based Assessment.

3. Extensive use of resources

A variety of resources, such as poems and songs, short stories, advertisements and commercials and websites, were included in each of the theme-based modules in order to enhance English learning, arouse interest, broaden learning experiences and provide learners with opportunities for life-wide learning as suggested in the curriculum guide.

What happened

Three modules were developed in the academic year 2008 - 2009:

Task and Activity	NSS language skill & knowledge integrated
Module 1: Making a difference	
<p>1. Making a difference at home</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Resource used: ETV programme “Teen File” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students shared their feelings about growing up. • Students discussed common problems teens encounter in their relationships with their parents and possible solutions. ➤ Resource used: Web page “Getting along with parents” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students applied reading skills and strategies to make sense of the web page and learned about the text features. • They made connections between the advice in the text and their own experiences and shared their ideas with their group members. ➤ Resource used: Questionnaire <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students interviewed each other about the contribution they made at home in terms of household chores and reviewed asking and answering questions using adverbs of frequency and simple present tense. ➤ Resources used: Song “In trouble” and some “preposition poems” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In pairs, students discussed and made judgements about the speaker in the song relating them to the evidence in the lyrics as training for the role of “Character Expert” in their future literature circle discussions. • Students identified rhyming words in lyrics. They then reviewed the use of prepositions in the context of the lyrics. • Students read a number of preposition poems and wrote preposition poems first in groups and then on their own. <p>2. Making a difference in the world</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Resource used: Song “Heal the World” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students listened to the song for main ideas and learned about the use of repetition in lyrics. • They discussed things they could do for people in need in order to make the world a better place. They then organised their ideas in a mind map and presented them in class. • They completed and presented their mini-project “Helping others in real life” which was about what they did for others at home or in the community. 	<p>Knowledge</p> <p>1. Literary element</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rhyming words • Repetition <p>2. Popular culture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Features of web pages: navigation bar, headings, links and graphics • Audience analysis <p>Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expressing and responding to opinions • Providing supporting ideas for their opinions • Making judgements about characters and relating them to evidence in the text • Presenting their ideas systematically making use of appropriate cohesive devices <div style="text-align: center;"> </div> <p style="text-align: center;">Students' preposition poems</p>



“This is my first time helping my mum do the ironing!”

Module 2: Think Geek

1. Talking about popular gadgets among teenagers

- Students made a list of popular gadgets among teenagers.
- They played a bingo game with the words about gadgets.
- They worked in pairs to solve the cases of mystery gadgets and practised giving definition of things using relative pronouns.

2. Learning about different story types

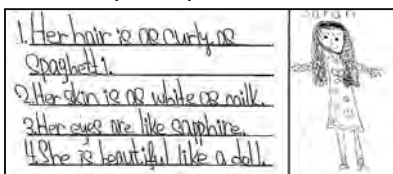
- Students read excerpts of different stories and identified story types.
- They then reflected and told each other about their preferences and habits in reading.

3. Reading a short story about a lie detector invented by a teen

- Resources used: **Short story “Ex Poser”**
 - Students worked in groups to predict the embarrassing questions the main character would ask his victim in the story and voted for the most embarrassing questions suggested by their peers.
 - They applied reading skills and strategies to make sense of the web page and learned about its text features.
 - Students shared and discussed in pairs the new words they learned from the story as training for the role of “Word Wizard” in their future literature circle discussions.
 - Students all took the role of the “Character Expert” and conducted a literature circle discussion about their opinions on different characters in the story.
 - Students talked about the feelings of the characters at different stages in the story using present and past participles.



“Character Experts” at work



- They invented a character and wrote a description of him/her using simile.
- They wrote a diary about the incident in the story as one of the characters.

4. Inventing and promoting their own gadgets

- Resource used: **Excerpts from a web page about the latest cool gadgets**
 - Students read excerpts to guess what the gadgets were and learned the form and function of passive voice.
- Resources used: **Logos and slogans of well-known brands**
 - Students identified the brands by looking at their logos and completed their slogans in pairs.
 - In groups, they discussed the features of slogans.
- Resources used: **TV commercials about different gadgets**
 - Students watched a number of commercials and analysed how they appealed to their audience.
 - Group project: Students worked in groups to invent and make a TV commercial to promote their own gadgets. The best commercials from each class were selected for the Inter-class TV Commercial Competition.

Knowledge

1. Figurative language

- Simile

2. Short stories

- Different story types (e.g. fables, fairy tales, historical, realistic and science fiction)
- Literary elements of stories: setting, characters, plot, conflicts, characterisation, points of view

3. Popular Culture

- Features and functions of logos and slogans
- Features of commercials and lines of appeal
- Audience analysis
- Features and functions of storyboards

Skills

- Expressing and responding to opinions
- Beginning and closing a discussion
- Asking for repetition and clarification
- Applying turn-taking strategies during discussions
- Making judgements about characters and relating them to evidence in the text
- Presenting their ideas systematically making use of appropriate cohesive devices



Students working on their storyboard



Scenes from students' commercials

Module 3: Be a friend of the Earth

1. Reading a short story about an alien attack on earth

➤ Resources used: **Short story "Emergency Landing"**

- Students applied reading skills and strategies to make sense of the story and worked in pairs to do dramatic reading of lines from the story.
- Students drew and presented a picture of a scene from the story as part of their training for the role of "Scene Setter" in their future literature circle discussions.



2. Appreciating our world

➤ Resource used: **TV Commercial "I love the world"**

- Students focussed on the rhythm and syllables of the song and worked in groups to complete and sing an additional verse they wrote for it.



An MTV compiling the new verses students wrote

3. Taking care of our world

➤ Resources used: **Questionnaire "Are you an Eco-angel or an Eco-devil?" & song "It's up to you and me"**

- Students interviewed each other to find out how eco-friendly their partners were.
- They listened to the song to complete some captions for pictures about ways to protect the environment.
- Students discussed things that people should do to protect the environment. They then presented their group's suggestions in class.

4. Conducting a survey

➤ Resource used: **Bar charts**

- Students worked in groups to design a questionnaire to find out how environmentally friendly their schoolmates were.
- They learned to interpret the information presented in a bar chart.
- Group project: Students conducted the survey and presented their findings in class.
- Each student wrote a survey report on the findings of their survey and illustrated it with appropriate bar charts.

Knowledge

1. Literary elements

- Rhyming words
- Syllables and rhythm
- Mood
- Onomatopoeia



A new verse written by students

2. Short stories

- Basic elements of plots : setting, characters, plot, conflicts, characterisation, twists and twist endings

3. Social issues

- Features of bar charts - title, labels, bars and numbers and the key
- Setting yes/no questions for a survey questionnaire
- Performing interviews
- Reporting on survey findings

Skills

- Using polite expressions in making a request and showing appreciation
- Presenting information with graphs and writing
- Presenting information using appropriate expressions (e.g. All/None of ..., ... out of ...)
- Presenting their ideas systematically making use of appropriate cohesive devices

Teaching grammar in context

An example from each module is given here to illustrate how grammar was taught and learned in context:

Module 1: Making a difference	Module 2: Think Geek	Module 3: Be a friend of the environment
Giving reasons using “because” and “since”	Form and function of passive voice	Form and function of first conditional sentences
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A listening task was designed to draw students’ attention to the reasons some teenagers gave for their views about growing up at the beginning part of the ETV programme. 2. The function and form of “because” and “since” were explained and students practised the form by completing a jumbled sentence task. 3. Students were asked to share and explain their own views on growing up with their peers which provided further practice of the target language. 4. Students wrote about and explained the text-to-self/text/world connections they made with the character in the programme. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students were asked to read excerpts from a webpage which described some latest cool gadgets and guess what they were used for. 2. Their answers were then used as examples to illustrate the form and function of passive verbs. 3. Students were asked to identify all the passive verbs in the excerpts. 4. Students rewrote sentences from active to passive voice. 5. Students then invented a gadget in groups and then wrote a description about it making use of the passive voice in context. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students reviewed the new vocabulary about environmental protection they learned in the previous lessons by completing a number of first conditional sentences. 2. Students’ attention was then drawn to the verbs in two clauses in the sentences. The form and function of the first conditional sentences was then explained explicitly. 3. Students completed a number of first conditional sentences about linked events related to people’s actions and the environment. 4. Students played a board game with the sentence structure as further practice. 5. Students wrote about how their simple actions could bring about positive changes to the environment making use of the target sentence structure.

Assessment for learning

Rubrics for assessing students’ writing and speaking performances, as well as for their projects, were developed to help them become more conscientious and purposeful in using what they have learned in the lessons. Some samples are shown below:

S.1-3 English -- Assessment of writing tasks											
Content (20 marks) Content / Interest / Ideas / Creativity	Grammar (20 marks) Grammatical accuracy / range of structures	Organisation (10 marks) Organisation / paragraphing / linking / completion	Vocabulary (10 marks) Rare / debates / vocabulary								
Level 5 All content is relevant, interesting and shows a high level of creativity. Ideas are fully-developed.	Shows excellent understanding of a range of grammatical structures. Uses a wide-range of sentence types to improve style of writing. Minor errors do not affect meaning.	Writing is carefully composed with effective structure. Paragraphs have clear topic sentences, and linking of ideas is smooth. Task is fully-completed.	Use vocab spe								
<p>Bonus Mark for the writing in mini-project:</p> <p>You should underline or highlight the writing related to the focuses below with d colors to make it easier for your teachers to spot them.</p> <p>Example 1: Vocabulary (5 marks) + Elaboration of ideas (5) = 10</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Level</th> <th>Vocabulary: writing with 3-5 newly acquired vocabulary in the module</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>Made an attempt to try out using the new words learnt. At least one them is used appropriately and accurately in the context.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3</td> <td>Shown effort in making use of the new words learnt. Most of the w are used accurately and appropriately in the context.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5</td> <td>Shown effort in making use of the new words learnt and all of them</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>				Level	Vocabulary: writing with 3-5 newly acquired vocabulary in the module	1	Made an attempt to try out using the new words learnt. At least one them is used appropriately and accurately in the context.	3	Shown effort in making use of the new words learnt. Most of the w are used accurately and appropriately in the context.	5	Shown effort in making use of the new words learnt and all of them
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Rubrics for Literature Circle Discussion											
Preparation (5 marks)	Quality of Comments (10 marks)	Reference to Text (10 marks)									
Level 5 Abundantly well-prepared for the discussion as shown in work on Role Sheet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leads the group to more than one new insight about the story <i>or</i> about life/the world based on the story. Asks several questions that shows a genuine interest in pursuing an answer. Always able to make appropriate use of formulaic expressions and/or simple turn-taking strategies to maintain interaction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Always makes appropriate references in the story to support or challenge ideas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can always resp 								
Level Satisfactorily well	Leads the group to a new insight about the story or about	Makes appropriate									



Impact

1. Students' enjoyment of the English lessons has increased. In fact, from the findings of the questionnaires designed to collect students' feedback on the modules, 77.6% expressed that they found the content of the modules interesting and 78.4% thought that the topics chosen were relevant to their experiences.
2. Students have gained confidence in speaking. Their responses to the questions concerning their confidence in speaking at the end of the modules were consistently high, with 77.7% saying that they believed they could express themselves and respond to others' opinions, 75% and 68.1% said that they had confidence in opening and closing a discussion appropriately and inviting others to participate in a discussion.
3. As reflected in their performance during lessons and in their assignments, students have gained basic language knowledge and skills required in the NSS.
4. The teachers expressed that not only have they gained confidence and skills in teaching the NSS elective modules, they are now more ready to try out using a variety of resources in their lessons and allow more opportunities for collaborative activities in their lessons.

Facilitating factors

1. Teachers' commitment and resourcefulness

Teachers showed commitment to the success of the project. They were always looking for ways to improve and refine the teaching materials and teaching practices to better cater for their students' needs and interests. They are also very resourceful in finding appropriate materials for the modules and skilled in information technology, which have proved invaluable in making the modules attractive to the students.

2. Support of the Principal and Heads of English

The Principal and English Panel Heads were very supportive of the project. The Principal and the Senior Form Panel Head's encouragement and trust in the teachers, as well as the direct involvement of the Junior Form Panel Head in the project, encouraged and allowed teachers to try out different innovative strategies to improve their students' learning.

3. Support of the other members of the school

The IT technician had worked very closely with the English teachers and was willing to provide assistance to the students in the production of their videos. His expertise and assistance contributed a lot to the success of the students' projects. Apart from this, the encouragement and interest other teachers showed in the students' work and the willingness of some of them to take up roles in the students' commercials, all contributed to the positive learning experience the students gained from the project.



Difficulties and suggestions

1. The design and preparation required for implementing the modules is very demanding and time-consuming. A more strategic deployment aimed at creating space for the core teachers is necessary.
2. Most students lack skills in video-editing. There are several ways to solve the problem:
 - (i) the option of acting out their commercials live during the lesson could be provided to the students who are not skilled in video-editing;
 - (ii) all commercials could be performed live during the lesson and only the most outstanding one in class would be videotaped; or
 - (iii) a training workshop on video-editing could be arranged for several students from each class at the beginning of the school term so that these students could teach or help their classmates in the production of their TV commercials later.
3. Some of the texts selected and the literature circles are found too challenging for the weakest students. Teachers could consider providing differentiated instructions and materials for students of different abilities, adapting the existing modules and breaking down the tasks into smaller ones.

Reference

The Curriculum Development Council and the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority. (2007). English Language Education KLA: English Language Curriculum and Assessment Guide (S4 – 6). HKSARG: The Education and Manpower Bureau.

Kowloon Tong School (Secondary Section)
Ada LAM (Language Support Officer)



Facing the challenges of the New Senior Secondary curriculum through curriculum planning at junior secondary level

Background

In recent years, preparation for the coming of the New Senior Secondary (NSS) curriculum has been a major area of concern for schools. Panel Heads worry about how to make sure both teachers and students are ready to meet the challenges of the new curriculum. In order to do so, they must make changes to the curriculum in junior forms, and also to the styles of teaching and learning practised in the classroom. This article defines some of the challenges presented by the NSS and shows how three schools have been working and planning over the past three years in order to meet them effectively. All three schools have used the teaching of language arts as a starting point in preparing for the NSS.

Levels

S1-3

NSS challenges for English teachers

1. Introduction of elective modules
2. Emphasis on school-based assessment
3. Importance of generic and independent study skills
4. Emphasis on assessment for learning
5. Need to cater for learner diversity

Strategies used

Curriculum design for junior forms

- Integrating skills and content from the elective modules into the S1-S3 curriculum
- Integrating School-based Assessment-type activities into the curriculum for junior forms

Teaching and learning

- Introducing projects which enable students to develop generic and independent study skills
- Promoting a variety of forms of assessment, such as portfolios and the use of rubrics for teacher and peer assessment
- Using a variety of strategies for dealing with learner diversity

What happened: Examples from three schools

School 1- NLSI Lui Kwok Pat Fong College

School background

- A CMI school with student intake of above average ability
- Students diligent and capable, but achievement in English is lower than other subjects
- Many projects have been implemented to enrich the English environment of the school
- Principal highly supportive of efforts to raise achievement in English

Strategies used

Curriculum design for junior forms

Year	Preparation
2006-2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Language arts materials and text types introduced into all levels from S1 to S3.<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Integrated unit on Christmas designed for S1. Includes fiction (Christmas Carol) and poems (acrostics, shape poems and rhyming poems)• A popular culture unit and project on comic book heroes designed for S2.• Materials from a seed project for poetry and fiction (Charlie and the Chocolate Factory) adapted and used in S3• Healthy Snacks project introduced in S3. Students create and perform TV advertisements for invented products
2007-2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Systematic integration of language arts elements (poems and songs, short stories, popular culture) in the JS curriculum.<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Appointment of coordinator for language arts• Form coordinators include language arts elements in the scheme of work for each level• Poems and songs introduced in S2• A unit on short stories (Science Fiction stories) introduced in S2➤ More space made available for school-based programmes tailored for students and catering for learner diversity.<ul style="list-style-type: none">• S1 use only one textbook, supplemented with school-based materials on poems and songs and fiction➤ Links made between the classroom and the extra-curricular programme maximises student involvement and the effectiveness of teachers' efforts.<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stories and storytelling are introduced in S1 and S2 by means of class work and an inter-class competition: fairy tales for S1 and fables for S2
2008-2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Language arts coordinator oversees integration of poems and songs in S1 to S3 to ensure continuity and progression and to eliminate repetition.➤ Tailoring of materials extended to S2. This level also has only one textbook this year.

Teaching and learning: Integrating assessment for learning

In order to assess students' language arts work more effectively, teachers have developed rubrics for peer, self and teacher evaluation. These enable students to understand the criteria by which their work is assessed. Rubrics are especially useful in assessing creative products such as stories, poems and drama or storytelling performances.

Item	Poor	1	2	3	4	5	Excellent
Product name, description and reasons for choosing	Very little thought has been given. Target audience not clear. No explanation of the reason for choosing this product	1	2	3	4	5	Much thought has been given to the choice of name. Product design shows originality. Reason is sensible and clearly explained.
Design of packaging	Packaging is not attractive and gives no detail about the product. The target audience is not considered in the design.	1	2	3	4	5	The packaging is attractive and carefully done. The design is suitable for the target audience. The packaging gives additional details about the product.
Slogan or Jingle	The slogan and/or jingle are very brief and grammatically incorrect. There is no attempt at rhyme, rhythm, or making the words interesting	1	2	3	4	5	The slogan and/or jingle are well thought-out and create interest in the product. Alliteration, rhyme and/or repetition have been used with a clear purpose.

Rubric for S3 Healthy Snacks project

15. Please write down your overall feelings about this Module. Do you like to learn English with language arts?
 I think it is interesting it is because I can receive Christmas cards. I like to learn English with language arts.

16. Which lesson(s) impress(es) you most?
 Merry Christmas Mr. Bean it is because Mr. Bean is funny.

S1 student's reflection

In order to motivate students to take their language arts work seriously, teachers ask them to keep a portfolio of all their language arts work from S1 to S3. Marks for the portfolio are included in the term marks for each student.

Impact

Teachers' development

Through attendance at courses and regular collaborative lesson planning (CLP) meetings, teachers have developed confidence in handling language arts texts and activities. They are also more aware of the need to integrate language arts activities into the curriculum. Their increased confidence is reflected in the move to replace one textbook in S1 and S2 with school-based language arts materials.

Curriculum design

- Language arts elements have been integrated into the curriculum at all levels, with thought given to the progression of skills across age groups.
- The appointment of a coordinator for language arts who attends all CLP meetings has promoted a more global view of progression from S1 to S3 and how this relates to the introduction of the NSS curriculum. In turn, this has better enabled those experienced teachers responsible for the design of the NSS electives to see how their work in SS1-3 can connect with and build on the work in S1 to S3.

Students' performance

- The regular competitions featuring story-telling, movie making and TV advertisements have promoted a more positive attitude to English among students and enhanced the English environment of the school. Students lower down the school can be shown examples of good performance by their predecessors, which encourages them to complete the tasks to the best of their ability.
- The school is beginning to see improvements in Territory-wide System Assessment results and passing percentages in public examinations. For example, the passing rate in the HK Certificate of Education examination increased slightly in 2008, and there was also a small improvement in the value-addedness score for that academic year.

School 2 - Tin Ka Ping Secondary School

School background

- A high banding CMI school in the district
- Capable students, actively participating in various extra-curricular activities
- Teachers enthusiastic, receptive and ready for change, but having the need to create space for initiatives and curriculum planning
- School managers supportive of English learning and creating an English-speaking environment in the school

Strategies used

Curriculum design for junior forms

Year	Preparation
2006-2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ With the class reader as an entry point, a drama module is developed for S1 students, who are the first batch of students attempting the NSS.<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reading strategies like predicting, inferencing, making connections etc. are explicitly taught. Various approaches of teaching reading are used, namely shared reading, supported reading, jigsaw reading and independent reading.• Drama teaching is incorporated as post-reading activities to develop students' drama-related skills like concentration, use of movements and gestures, sense of stage and audience, intonation and voice projection.• Students respond to texts through speaking (discussion, experience sharing) and writing (poems, scripts) activities. Tasks are also designed to develop students' listening and dictionary skills.• Classroom learning is reinforced in the school's annual drama competition where students can apply the skills and language learned. This also provides them with a platform for celebration of success.
2008-2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Poems and songs are infused into the S2 English curriculum, with language arts materials supplementing and/or replacing the textbook.<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teaching materials are developed for a choral speaking set piece of the Annual School Speech Festival. All S2 students have a chance to learn about the poem and participate in choral speaking. Only one group is selected to join the Festival.• Songs and poems are infused into GE units "Charity", "Going Places" and "Our Environment". Different types of poems and poetic features are introduced to students and the materials are adopted for different purposes like arousing students' interest in the topic, generating discussions, etc.

2008-2009

- A short story module is developed, in which two short stories, "Ex Poser" and "Hairy Toe", are introduced to students.
 - A genre-based approach is adopted to help students gain a more in-depth perspective to the different types of short stories.
 - In addition to teaching reading strategies, there is more emphasis on teaching story elements like characterisation and plot development.
 - Students respond to the texts while and after reading through group discussions on the story theme/moral, writing a story sequel and writing a short story, paying special attention to plot development.

Teaching and Learning

Developing students' generic skills

Students' progress in generic skills is significant with the introduction of language arts materials. Reading and responding to different texts help students develop their critical thinking skills, whereas participating in group work allows students to collaborate and communicate with others. Also, their confidence is greatly enhanced when they take part in drama and choral speaking competitions. Students' creativity is demonstrated in their poems, drama productions and script writing. All these contribute to a heightened learning motivation in students, which is also essential in their self-learning process.



Creativity demonstrated on stage

Catering for learner diversity

Special attention has been given to catering for learner diversity. In the drama module, materials are graded for students of different abilities with careful scaffolding. The set poem for the Speech Festival 'Caribbean Carnival Cavalcade' may be too challenging for some students. Therefore, the text length is adjusted for different classes to illustrate the same teaching point. In this way, more able students are given more challenges and space to generate knowledge by themselves, while the less able students still find learning the poem manageable. The teaching focus also varies for different ability groups. In teaching short stories, teachers conduct more discussions on moral issues for more able groups and provide them with an extended reading list to stretch their potential. For weaker classes, teachers focus on helping students develop essential reading skills and more illustrations are provided for them.



Graded materials for different ability groups

Impact

Teachers' development

A sharing culture is nurtured among teachers through regular co-planning meetings. They explore effective learning and teaching methodology, share their hands-on experiences in using language arts materials and discuss how to sustain these practices in their teaching.

Curriculum development

There has been a more holistic planning of the junior secondary English curriculum. Vertically, language arts materials are incorporated across the junior secondary levels so that students attempting the NSS are exposed to various language arts text types. Horizontal planning and coherence making between the formal and informal curricula are essential in promoting teaching and learning effectiveness as well as in creating space and time for initiatives.

Students' performance

- Students are introduced to a variety of language arts in a progressive and organised manner. This gradual change for students enhances a smoother interface between the junior secondary and senior secondary curricula.
- Language arts materials are significant in enhancing students' learning motivation. Interactive drama activities are particularly motivating for students and they are highly engaged in stage performances which they produce by themselves. They also gain a great sense of ownership and achievement, even in creating very short language arts texts, e.g. poems. Appreciating language arts texts is stimulating and helpful in developing students' cultural and language awareness.

School 3 - Stewards Pooi Tun Secondary School

School background

- Student intake of average and slightly below average ability
- Students are well-disciplined and eager to learn.
- There is no text book for junior forms. Only school-based materials designed by teachers are used.
- The panel chair is very capable in curriculum design and takes a leading role in developing materials.

Strategies used

Curriculum design for junior forms

Year	Preparation
2006-2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Review of the S1 school-based curriculum with a view to integrating language arts materials and activities integrated into the programme:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Poems are introduced in the first term, in the context of a unit on "School Life".• Short stories are introduced by means of the reader "Stories of Oscar Wilde". Work focuses on character and theme.• Drama is introduced in the second term, by means of an inter-class competition on the topic of "Festivals".• Popular culture is introduced by means of a unit on shopping and a TV commercials project.

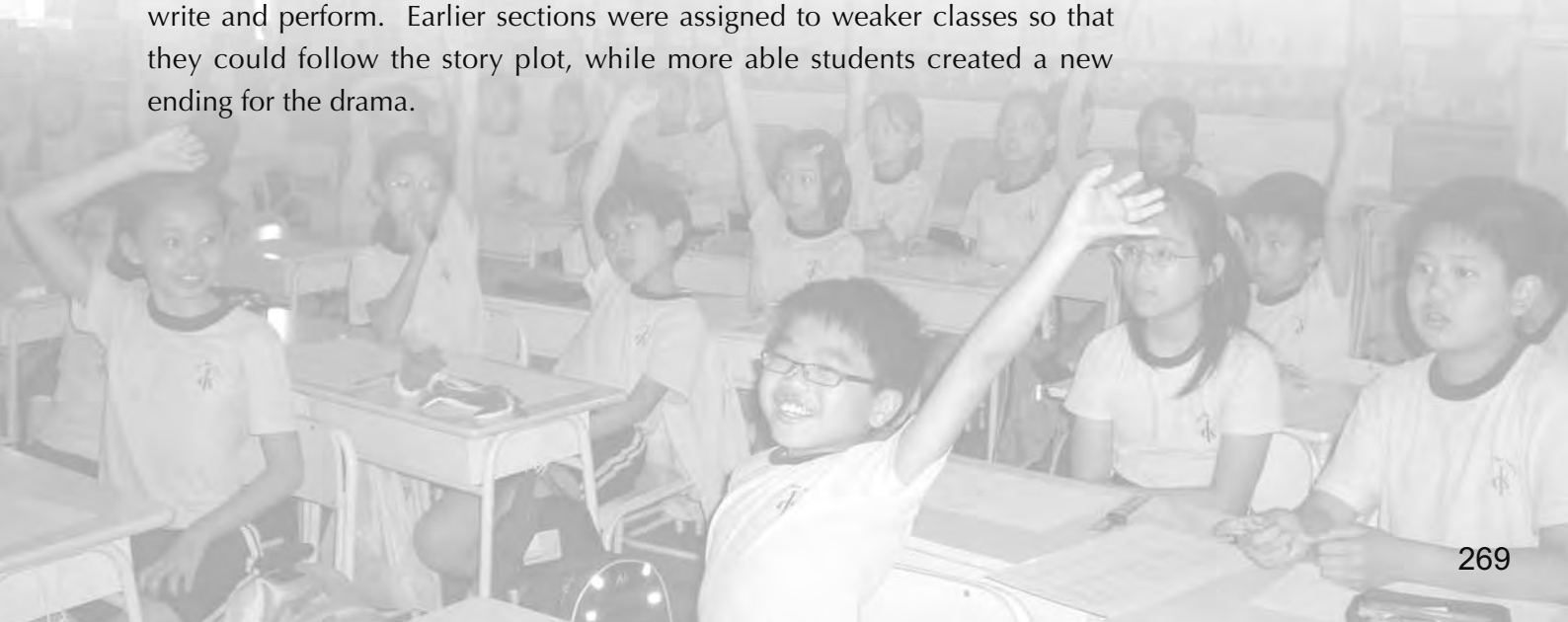
2007-2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Review of the S2 school-based curriculum, incorporating both language arts and non-language arts elements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A drama project based on the reader “Wizard of Oz” is implemented, in collaboration with an external provider hired under the English Enhancement Scheme. • Popular culture is integrated by means of a project on “Teen Magazines”. • Debating is introduced and two debates are held in class.
2008-2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Review of the S3 school-based curriculum to include language arts and non-language arts elements and promote independent reading in preparation for school-based assessment (SBA): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social issues are introduced in the context of a unit on Hong Kong and its famous citizens. • Elements of workplace communication are integrated in some units, for example, creating and presenting an invention. • More short stories are introduced related to the unit themes. Work focusses on students’ understanding of the themes of the stories. Students also write their own stories, based on those they have read. • A reading log is introduced to promote independent reading. Students are also asked to make comparisons between the stories they read.

Teaching and learning: Catering for learner diversity

The school has emphasised the use of strategies which enable weaker learners to participate on an equal basis in inter-class projects. For example, in the S1 project on “Festivals”, each class compared two festivals and presented the similarities and differences in a board display and a drama. Each class deals with different festivals, allowing for differentiation of materials and strategies according to the students’ abilities. Since students had to read a large amount of information in order to complete the project successfully, weaker classes were supplied with a variety of reading materials tailored to their level, whereas more able students were asked to search from recommended websites and booklists. A similar procedure was followed in the S2 drama project “Wizard of Oz”. Each class was assigned a scene from the story to write and perform. Earlier sections were assigned to weaker classes so that they could follow the story plot, while more able students created a new ending for the drama.



Students take part in a drama about festivals





Impact

Teachers' development

As a result of regular co-planning and implementation of self-designed units, teachers have developed great facility in curriculum design, and a reflective attitude towards their work.

Curriculum design

Tailor-made materials incorporating elements of both language arts and non-language arts electives have been designed for S1 to S3. The modules include a variety of authentic materials and provide opportunities for extending students' generic skills by means of independent research and group projects.

Students' performance

- The use of tailored materials has ensured that students are exposed to a wide variety of text types and activities suited to their interests and level.
- Because students have to deal with authentic texts and conduct research independently, their research skills have improved and their writing shows fewer examples of "Chinglish" sentence structures.
- Inter-class competitions and projects have raised the profile of English in the school and allowed students of all abilities to contribute.

Facilitating factors for all schools

Attention to teachers' professional development

- Arrangements can be made for teachers to attend professional development courses. For example, at NLSI Lui Kwok Pat Fong College, over a period of 3 years most English teachers have been released to attend the 8-week language arts course at Hong Kong Institute of Education.
- Collaborative planning promotes discussion of teaching strategies and evaluation of modules.
- With the help of money from the English Enhancement Grant, experienced teachers can be provided with time and space to work on planning and materials development for NSS.

Willingness to make space for curriculum initiatives

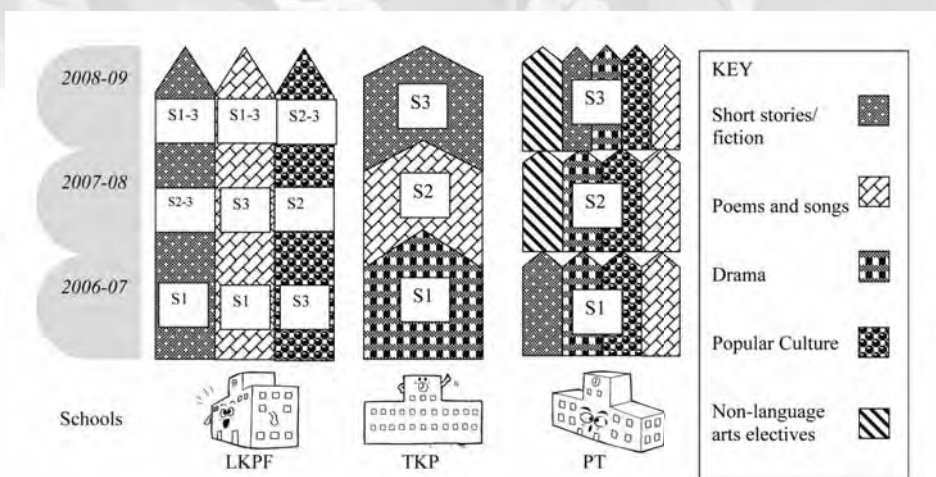
Stewards Pooi Tun Secondary School has abandoned textbooks in favour of school-based materials in the junior forms. At NLSI Lui Kwok Pat Fong College, one textbook is used in S1 and S2 instead of two, to free time for school-based projects. At Tin Ka Ping Secondary School, textbook materials have been replaced with language arts materials designed by teachers.

Connecting classroom teaching and the extra-curricular programme

All the schools have used classroom work as a basis of inter-class extra-curricular programmes. This allows for greater student participation and maximises the impact of teachers' efforts.

Conclusions and suggestions

Comparing the three schools' approaches to curriculum design for junior forms



It can be seen that each school has adopted a different approach when integrating elements of the elective modules into the junior secondary curriculum. At Tin Ka Ping Secondary School, one elective and one year group have been chosen for particular attention each year. The rationale behind this approach is to focus on that cohort of students who will be the first to experience the NSS and to ensure that they have grounding in the chosen electives. The other schools, however, have taken different approaches. At NLSI Lui Kwok Pat Fong College, different electives have been integrated into different year groups over the three years, not always starting with S1. The emphasis has been more on the integration of language arts into the curriculum in general, rather than focussing on a particular group of students. At Stewards Pooi Tun Secondary School, teachers have reviewed the curriculum year-by-year to include elements from a wide range of electives, focussing on language arts in S1 and widening the scope to include non-language arts in S2 and S3. This approach means that students have exposure to skills and knowledge from a variety of electives while in the junior forms. They will not be disadvantaged should there later be changes in the choice of electives offered by the school.

Clearly it would be ideal to expose students to elements from as many electives as possible in the junior forms. However, this may not be possible in all contexts. At Stewards Pooi Tun Secondary School, school-based materials have replaced textbooks entirely. This gives teachers freedom but also puts many demands on their time and expertise. At Tin Ka Ping Secondary School and NLSI Lui Kwok Pat Fong College, elements of the electives have been chosen to align with textbook units and in some cases have replaced textbook items. No matter how or in what order the elective modules are introduced, however, it is important to ensure a wide coverage and to plan the development of skills systematically. Bearing this goal in mind, schools may take the approach which best suits them and their students.

NLSI Lui Kwok Pat Fong College
Bridget IP (Language Support Officer)
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Learning English through Workplace Communication : A trial New Senior Secondary elective module that caters for learner diversity



Background

Many schools are concerned with the preparation of the Elective Part of the New Senior Secondary (NSS) English Curriculum. As 2009 is approaching, some schools have tried out materials they have worked on to examine the effectiveness of learning and teaching.

Yan Chai Hospital No.2 Secondary School is a co-educational school with students of diverse ability and interests. Teachers have designed a “Learning English through Workplace Communication” module which aims at providing opportunities for students to learn English in a fun way and motivating them to equip themselves with the required skills for their future careers. The school did the trial project in S4 and the whole project took up around twenty-five to thirty 40-minute lessons.

Level

S4



Strategies used

In order to motivate students to learn English, teachers designed a “Learning English through Workplace Communication” module, which all students would enjoy and be interested in. To achieve this goal, teachers decided to adopt **Differentiated Instruction** (Tomlinson, 2003). Research studies indicate that students are more successful in school and are more engaged if they are taught in ways that are responsive to their **readiness** levels (Vygotsky, 1986), their **interests** (Csikszentmihaly, 1990), and their **learning profiles** (Sternberg et al., 1998).

What happened

Phase	Task / Activity	Differentiated instruction according to students' abilities
<i>Phase 1</i> Introduction to the wedding planning industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading newspapers, magazines and websites 	<p>Readiness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simplified versions of newspapers/ magazine articles provided Reading materials provided by teachers vs reading materials searched by students
<i>Phase 2</i> Job Hunting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Filling in application forms / Writing application letters Writing resumes Preparing for and attending job interviews 	<p>Readiness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Application forms vs application letters + resumes <p>Learning profiles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interview video produced by teachers Movie clips of interview scenes

<p><u>Phase 3</u> Setting up wedding companies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating company names • Creating company logos • Deciding service(s) to be provided 	<p>Interest</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Company names and logos designed by students • Students allowed to select services they are interested in <p>Readiness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job types which require higher intellectual ability vs job types which focus more on skills • Each company could select the number of services they could provide
<p><u>Phase 4</u> Preparing for Wedding Expo</p> <p><u>Phase 5</u> Wedding Expo</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sales Presentations • Exhibition • Introducing the companies to visitors • Wedding Outfit Catwalk • Writing leaflets/ catalogues/ (optional) • Producing company portfolios 	<p>Interest</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students selected the jobs they would like to take up within the group <p>Readiness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jobs were allocated to team members according to their abilities • The companies were allowed to use different ways to introduce their companies to the visitors <p>Learner Profile</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jobs were allocated to team members according to their strengths (verbal, visual, kinesthetic, multiple intelligences)

1. Job advertisements (Individual writing task)

Students' work

Driver

Required by Transport Company. Male Only. Form 7 standard. Good manners. Preferably with kung-fu skills. Please call 1234 5678 or come to YCH2SS for interview. Bring driving license and kung-fu certificate.

Beautician

Required by Beauty Company. Female. Form 5 standard. 3 years experience essential. Preferably with experience of bridal make-up. Send application with photo, phone number and salary expected to Mary Chan, 345, King's Road West, Wan Chai, Hong Kong.

2. Job interviews

Snapshots of the job interview role plays video made by the school (students playing the role of interviewers and teachers playing the roles of candidates)



Candidate with "terrible" performance



Candidate with "poor" performance



Candidate with "good" performance

Observers (students) use the following rubrics to assess the candidate's performance

	1	2	3	4
1. Can present attractive and appropriate introduction that impresses the potential employer, gets attention and states reasons for wanting the job.				
2. Can make clear account of personal academic achievement, skills and knowledge specific to the job requirements.				
3. Can relate own strengths to match the job requirements.				
4. Can give appropriate response to the questions asked by potential employer.				
5. Can deliver enthusiastically with a clear and loud voice using suitable pauses.				
6. Can ask a significant question about the job that shows interest in the job.				

3. Sales presentations

Writing sales presentation speech (group writing task)

An example of student's work

Company: Cartoon World

Ladies and Gentlemen. Our company's name is Cartoon World. As the name suggests, the theme of our company is cartoons. It is great to use the lovely cartoon characters in wedding outfit designs because it can bring a sense of joy from the cartoon world to real life.

Our service includes wedding dress photography, video-recording, printing wedding invitation cards, decoration of the venue, setting the rundown of the wedding banquet, as well as hairstyle and cosmetic design. Our staff is professional. We can guarantee you an enjoyable dream wedding. Thank you.



"CEO" from companies giving sales presentation (Individual presentation)

4. Exhibition



Companies set up their booths in the Wedding Expo



Company staff introduced their service and products to the visitors



5. Wedding Outfit Catwalk

Wedding outfit description (Group writing task)

An example of student's work

Company: Unique Wedding Company

The wedding dress is made of recycled materials including cotton, lace, newspaper and cardboard. To outshine the other brides, the colours of silver and white are chosen. To add more details, feathers are used to decorate the left hand side of the hat. The wedding set also includes the pair of silver glass shoes to pave the path of the blessed wedding ahead.



Individual Catwalk



Models on the runway



Models on stage

A representative from each group read aloud the wedding outfit description script and audio recording was done. While the models were doing individual Catwalk on stage, the audio recordings were played.

Impact

1. Students were motivated to learn English

Student's reflection

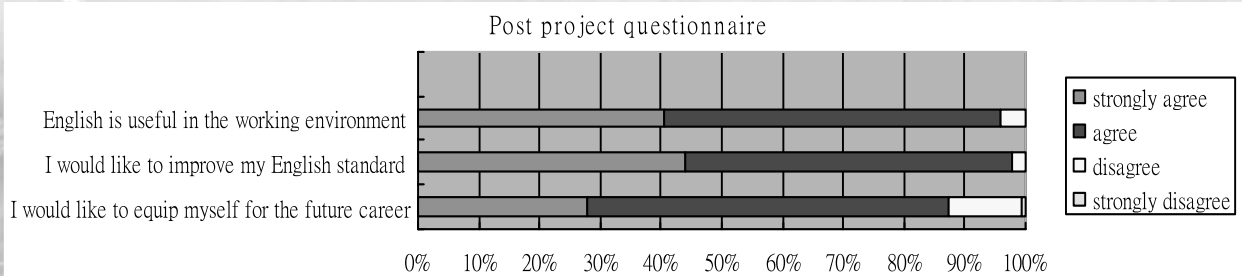
- "...the project made learning English become lively."

2. Students were more confident in using English for communication and presentation

Students' reflection

- "We could have the chance to use English to communicate with the visitors. Though I was a bit scared, I enjoyed the whole process very much."
- "I can learn a wide range of knowledge and skills in this project. I have made improvement in my writing skills."
- "As a presenter, at first I was quite worried. My voice was really low. After the rehearsals and the encouragement of the classmates, I felt better. Practice makes perfect. Just believe in yourself. Now, I could speak very loudly in front of the class."

3. Students realised the usefulness of English language in the working environment. They would like to improve their English and equip themselves for their future careers.



4. Students' generic skills

According to questionnaire and interview data, students felt that the project had improved their creativity (95%), problem-solving skills (88.1%), self-management skills (89.5%), communication skills (90.9%) and collaboration skills (96.5%). Many students enjoyed this aspect of the project, although many also found it challenging.

Students' reflection

- "The project developed our creativity." (Creativity)
- "We analysed the problems from different points of views." (Problem-solving)
- "I found it difficult to explain and promote our services and products to the clients, as our promotion and sales methods were not that attractive and not too many clients visited our booth. We changed our promotion method and from then we attracted lots of clients." (Problem-solving)
- "...sought advice from experienced people and searched information from internet." (Problem-solving)

5. Students got a sense of achievement

Students' reflection

- "I felt very touched and had a sense of achievement when seeing the model wearing the dress designed by our group."
- "I could never imagine we can do something like this."
- "We were really shocked to know that we had to design wedding gown for the Catwalk. We thought it would be impossible for us to do this with our limited experience. But under the guidance and teaching of teachers, showing us some magazines for reference, we gradually understood more. Finally we could design a beautiful wedding gown, and we were astonished."

6. Students got to know more about the working environment

Student's reflection

- "We could learn more about workplace English and oral skills through this module. Besides, I know a bit more about the operation of a company."

Facilitating factors

1. The success is attributed to the involvement of enthusiastic and creative teachers who were devoted to planning the elective module and developing the materials. They were dedicated in helping the students to achieve the tasks.
2. The full support given by the principal and the English panel head to the S4 teachers facilitated the success of the project.
3. The school made good use of human resources. They invited a professional wedding planner to give comments to the students. He shared with the students some real workplace experience. The school also involved parents in the project — the decoration of the stage and the run-way were prepared with the help of the parents; the school also invited the parents to the Wedding Expo. Parents got to know more about the NSS, what their children were doing and what their children will do in the future. Some teachers of other subjects volunteered to provide assistance to the project (e.g. training students to do Catwalk, visiting the booths and using English to communicate with students during their visits).



Difficulties and suggestions


1. Both teachers and students thought that they did not have enough time for the project. It was suggested that there should be 1-2 months for students to prepare for the Wedding Expo.
2. S4 students found the project challenging. The school will consider implementing “Learning English through Workplace Communication” in the second term of S5 or first term of S6 when students are more ready for the tasks.

Tips for other schools which would offer “Learning English through Workplace Communication”

1. Some teachers found thirty 40-minute lessons insufficient to cover different types of workplace correspondence. It was suggested that teachers could actually cover some or all workplace text types in the core part and allow more time for students to apply the knowledge and skills they learn to the elective module.
2. Not all teachers and students are interested in weddings. There are alternatives to the wedding company project:
 - (i) Students can be asked to set up companies to sell their own inventions.
 - (ii) Schools that are going to offer “Learning English through Popular Culture” may consider asking students to set up an advertising company. An advertising company also involves different departments, industries and job types. Companies can be asked to shoot some TV commercials.

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Using debate to improve English Language curriculum for students' cognitive and language development

Background

Under the New Senior Secondary academic structure which aims at nurturing independent learning among students, there is more obvious demand on their cognitive and language ability. In light of this, many English teachers have begun to see the value of using debate as a strategy to develop their students' thinking and language skills.

This article contains experiences from two schools which adopt different approaches to integrating debating into their school-based English curriculum in view of their different school contexts. As a well-established school which started early to prepare for the New Senior Secondary (NSS) curriculum, Pui Ching Middle School shares its experience of how social issues, thinking and debating skills are integrated in a coherent manner into their English curriculum across levels over a spread of three years. Pui Kiu College, which was established only in recent years, shares an alternative "short-cut" strategy of how to gain insight on what to do to improve its English curriculum at both junior and senior levels in light of the ticking clock just one year before the implementation of the NSS.

School 1: Pui Ching Middle School

Levels

S1-4

Strategies used

1. Coherent and progressive integration of thinking and debating skills into task-based units across levels

Debating and thinking skills were used as the entry point for developing the school-based English Language curriculum. They were coherently integrated into selected units in S1-S4 to prepare students for the New Senior Secondary English Language curriculum.



2. Explicit teaching of thinking and debating skills in lessons

Thinking skills (categorising ideas or concepts, identifying causes and consequences, analysing pros and cons, viewing issues from multiple perspectives, etc.) and debating skills (presenting strong arguments, giving evidence and reasons as support, making rebuttals, etc.) were explicitly taught in lessons. Social issues and current news were used as the context for students to acquire basic thinking and debating skills. In task-based units, scenarios and dilemmas were also provided and students had to adopt views from multiple perspectives.




3. Use of different debate formats to meet the varied needs of students with different language abilities






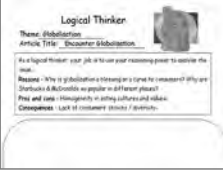
Different debate formats were used in different classes to meet students' varied needs. Different roles (captain, first speaker, second speaker, floor speaker, etc.) and tasks (presenting arguments, making rebuttals, summarising the main arguments, working out counter-arguments, etc.) with varied cognitive demands were assigned to individual students.






What happened

Thinking and debating skills were progressively included in the school-based English Language curriculum across levels to prepare students for the New Senior Secondary English Language curriculum as shown in the following table:

Level, unit & year (no. of cycle)	Debating skill	Thinking skill	Major learning activity	Students' output
S1 Friendship 2006- 2007 (3)	/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify actions & consequences Identify pros and cons of an action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work out solutions to solve problems in a given scenario 	Letters 

<p>S1 Food – You Are What You Eat: Believe It Or Not 2006-2007 (3)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use evidence, examples and facts to support arguments / claims • Use appropriate presentation skills to convince the audience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify cause-effect relationships • Identify facts, myths, opinions and fantasies • Make judgements based on evidence and facts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss advertisements, myths and news articles • Read and appreciate some food poems • Conduct research • Present project work 	<p>1.Oral presentations of project work</p>  <p>2. Written reports</p> 
<p>S1 Environmental Protection – Back to the Future 2006-2007 (3)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an argument with a point of view • Use evidence to support arguments • Use persuasive strategies • Identify wrong assumptions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify cause-effect relationships • Group ideas/ concepts under different categories • Analyse pros and cons • Use different perspectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read theme-related stories • Discuss social issues in groups • Conduct an inter-group debate 	<p>1.Inter-group debate</p>  <p>2.Proposals 3.Stories</p>
<p>S2 Stars 2007-2008 (3)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define key terms in a topic/ motion • Identify wrong assumptions • Use persuasive strategies and presentation skills to convince the audience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify cause-effect relationships • Group ideas/ concepts under different categories • Analyse pros and cons • Use multiple perspectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss social issues in groups • Conduct an inter-group debate 	<p>1.Inter-group debate</p>   <p>2.Personal profiles 3.Blogs</p>
<p>S4 Globalisation 2007-2008 (3)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a strong argument • Use evidence to support an argument • Rebut an argument 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain cause-effect relationships • Use multiple perspectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present arguments in groups and make rebuttals 	<p>Debating circles</p> 

<p>S3 Stay Healthy 2008-2009 (3)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use persuasive strategies and presentation skills to convince the audience • Use evidence to support arguments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain cause-effect relationships • Group ideas under different categories • Use multiple perspectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct research on the internet and study famous speeches • Present speeches in class 	<p>Presenting speeches in class</p> 
<p>S3 Technology – Danger or Fun 2008-2009 (3)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define key terms in a topic/ motion • Identify fallacies • Rebut arguments • Use persuasive strategies in presenting speeches to convince the audience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain cause-effect relationships • Group ideas and concepts under different categories • Use multiple perspectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct research on the internet • Learn classic speeches to develop public speaking skills • Express views from different perspectives in an English forum • Conduct an inter-group debate 	<p>1. Inter-group debate</p>  <p>2. An English forum</p> 

Impact

Students felt that they had benefited a lot from learning debating skills as they could improve their public speaking skills and writing content. They were able to present speeches with more confidence and develop valid arguments with good evidence in writing. Through exploring different social issues, their horizons were broadened and their critical thinking was developed. In the process, they also had ample opportunity for peer learning and independent learning. Junior form students could build a firm foundation for the New Senior Secondary English Language curriculum as they could acquire different language skills and strategies.

English teachers reflected that they had learned essential professional knowledge and skills on how to cover social issues and debating in the classroom. Based on the three-year experience in including debating and thinking skills in the English Language curriculum, they developed 50-period elective module plans on social issues and debating for the New Senior Secondary English Language curriculum. Their school-based experiences were also shared among different schools.



School 2 – Pui Kiu College

Level

S4

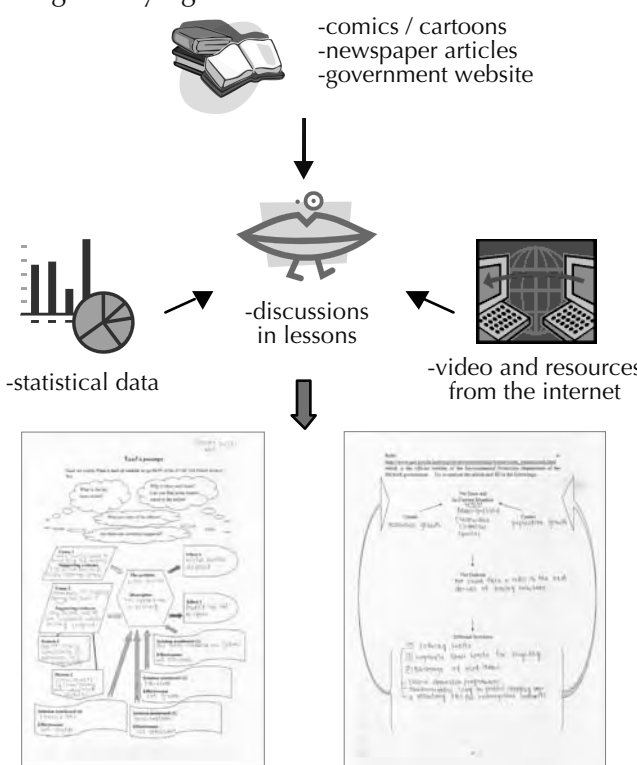




Strategies used

Main strategy	Expected outcome
Design a module of 35 lessons that leads to debates at S4	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Students are able to use thinking and various language skills in an integrative manner in an authentic situation;2. Teachers are equipped with the experience, knowledge and skills of integrating debate and thinking skills in the school-based senior English curriculum and delivering them in the classrooms;3. Teachers are able to gain insights on how the junior secondary school-based English curriculum could be further improved to better prepare students for the NSS

However, to a certain extent, it is not easy for students to acquire and master the necessary language and thinking skills for debates within a short period of time. Therefore, a few other strategies were adopted to support teachers and students to overcome their psychological barriers:

- Premising the debate on different perspectives of different parties toward an identified social issue
- Emphasising assessment for learning in the module design
- Integrating and adapting School-based Assessment criteria for individual presentations in the debates
- Using graphic organisers to simplify complicated concepts
- Encouraging peer learning through organising inter-class debates
- Encouraging the use of reflection among students

What happened

Rationale	Learning Process Part 1: 12 lessons	Skill developed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To give students background information of the issue to prepare them for the debate in Stage 2 on the motion “Source separation of domestic waste should be made compulsory in Hong Kong” To help students see multiple perspectives in a social issue To give students a chance to do oral presentations so they could get feedback for improvement from teachers and peers 	<p>Students examined the social issue of “Land pollution and landfill problems in Hong Kong” through studying different sources of data:</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p style="text-align: center;">-discussions in lessons</p> <p style="text-align: center;">-statistical data -video and resources from the internet</p> </div> <p style="text-align: center;">Students processed the data provided and re-organised them in graphic presentation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defining a social issue Identifying cause-and-effect relationships Evaluating a social issue from different perspectives Interpreting charts, data, facts and opinions Describing changes in statistical data
	<p>Learning output</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;">   </div> <p style="text-align: center;">Students did group presentations to share the different views of different parties in society towards the issue studied</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;">   </div>	

Part 2 : 23 lessons

Rationale

- To equip students with the basic knowledge of debates, language and techniques required
- To expose students to good sample speeches
- To sharpen students' logical thinking and ability to make rebuttals
- To organise debate speeches in a proper manner
- To encourage formative assessment and use constructive feedback

Learning Process

materials about basic knowledge of debates

video clips of essential debate skills

useful language and expressions in debates

speeches from famous speakers to illustrate the use of persuasive language

Arguments	Are the arguments logical?	Reasons to support your answers
	Yes No	
There is no doubt that smoking is harmful to health. Even the famous actor, Val Brynner, said so. So why shouldn't we ban smoking in all public places?		This is to quote words or opinions from famous people who may not necessarily be experts in the discussion.

practice on how to spot illogical thinking and make rebuttals

graphic planners used to organise speeches and allocate work in a debate team

Skill developed

- Defining terms and motions
- Expressing point of view towards a motion
- Substantiating an argument with evidence
- Rebutting opponent's arguments
- Planning, preparing for and carrying out a debate
- Evaluating performance against given criteria
- Reflecting on own learning

Learning output

in-class and inter-class debates on "Source separation of domestic waste should be made compulsory in Hong Kong"

constructive feedback from self, peer and teacher evaluation

Student Reflection

Impact

Gain in S4 student learning from student reflection	Implication for school-based English curriculum development at senior levels	Implication for school-based English curriculum development at junior levels
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Better use of evidence to support arguments• Enhanced presentation and communication skills• Greater confidence in the use of English• Better team-players	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Closer links between the core and elective parts are to be established to allow more flexible teaching of the debate elective module for repeated application and better consolidation of student learning over time (Task for 09-10)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focus on developing students' listening, thinking, reasoning and research skills, especially for the S3 cohort in second term (08-09)• Review the junior secondary English curriculum to ensure progressive coverage of language and thinking skills (Task for 09-10)

Facilitating factors of both cases

1. Open-mindedness among teachers involved

The openness of teachers in both schools facilitated inclusion of unconventional ideas such as integrating debating into the school-based English curriculum. This open-mindedness also allowed teachers to make debating an invaluable learning opportunity for all students. The two projects have dispelled the traditional belief that debate is something just for the elite.

2. Appreciation of the value of on-going review

While the projects were implemented, teachers in both schools actively collected evidence of student learning and feedback from officers to help them evaluate their work and make necessary adaptation. This appreciation of the value of on-going review has enabled a smoother implementation process and facilitated better project outcomes.

Way forward

Based on the experience in covering social issues, debating and thinking skills developed over these three years, Pui Ching Middle School will design the Elective Part of the NSS English Language curriculum while Pui Kiu College will conduct a holistic review of its school-based English curriculum in 2009-10 at both junior and senior levels.

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