

The background of the page is a faded, grayscale photograph of several students in a classroom. They are looking down at their desks, appearing to be engaged in a learning activity. The lighting is soft, and the overall tone is educational and focused.

Foreword

The burden is heavy and the road is long! Though this will surely strike a chord with most of our language teachers, the truth is they never give up. Since the turn of the century, language panel heads and teachers have been working tirelessly to help students build a firm foundation in language learning, and to implement the curriculum reform and a host of other language-related initiatives. Such efforts have paid off. The two rounds of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) conducted in 2006 and 2009 concluded that Hong Kong students' reading literacy levels are consistently high. In addition to that, the reduction in differences in student performance between schools suggested that Hong Kong's education system was heading towards greater equality as well as higher quality (SCMP, 8 December 2010). The achievements of our teachers in actualising the curriculum reform are indeed commendable.

Nonetheless, Hong Kong teachers are never complacent with what they have achieved. Over the last two years, we have seen a gradual enhancement of the role played by language teachers in our schools. The fine-tuning of the medium of instruction (MOI) arrangements in secondary schools has provided a good opportunity for schools to review their language policy and set realistic language goals for their students. The implication for language teachers is that they have to expand the scope of their work from supporting students to learn language to supporting students to learn through language. We are pleased to find that our language teachers are making a substantial contribution towards breaking subject boundaries by implementing Language Across the Curriculum (LAC) and cross-Key Learning Area (KLA) collaboration projects, and fostering a language-rich environment in their schools.

One other cause for celebration is the foresight shown by our primary language teachers. How are issues like the implementation of the New Senior Secondary (NSS) curriculum and the fine-tuning of the MOI in secondary schools related to primary teachers? They saw the link! In many of our collaborating schools, curriculum leaders and panel heads have infused the essence and the elements of the NSS curriculum into their senior primary language curriculum; and strengthened the teaching of the knowledge and skills which are required in learning different subjects at secondary level. This change of mindset and practice is a vivid testimony to the adoption of a learner-centred approach.

The positive changes described above are obviously a result of the collective efforts of the schools collaborating with us over the past two years. To capture the valuable experiences of these schools and to inspire teachers to improve teaching practices with regard to each unique school context, we have included in this publication the distillation of about 90 practices in the Chinese and English KLAs. Rather than exemplary practices to be replicated, these experiences are meant to illustrate the curriculum development process.

This publication is just one of the platforms we use for sharing and professional enhancement. The Task Force would like to thank schools and teachers for sharing their school-based experiences with different audiences through seminars and workshops, our web-page (<http://resources.edb.gov.hk/cd/languagesupport>), Language Matters (the newsletter of the Task Force) and thematic CD-ROMs which compile school-based learning and teaching resources and document the learning and teaching process.

In this issue of "The Language Teaching Album: A Collection of School-based Practices 2009-2011", we would like to offer special thanks to schools working with us on catering for the learning needs of their non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students. To promote our collaborative efforts and achievements to the public, our Section has taken part in the Civil Service Outstanding Service Award Scheme 2011 and was shortlisted for the second round of the competition. We sincerely hope that, apart from sharing our joy with you, we can share your heavy burden and make your long journey pleasant and meaningful.

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