



## Challenge 2 : Meeting the needs of diverse learners in the classroom

### Overview

#### Attitude

All schools share the mission of helping every student reach his or her full potential. However, teachers often find students in a class showing much diversity in their needs and interests. Students differ a lot in their motivation, prior knowledge and skills, learning styles, multiple intelligences, interests and backgrounds. To tap each student's potential, teachers need to value each student as an individual capable of making progress. Embracing learner diversity is therefore an important direction in school-based curriculum development.

#### Sensitivity

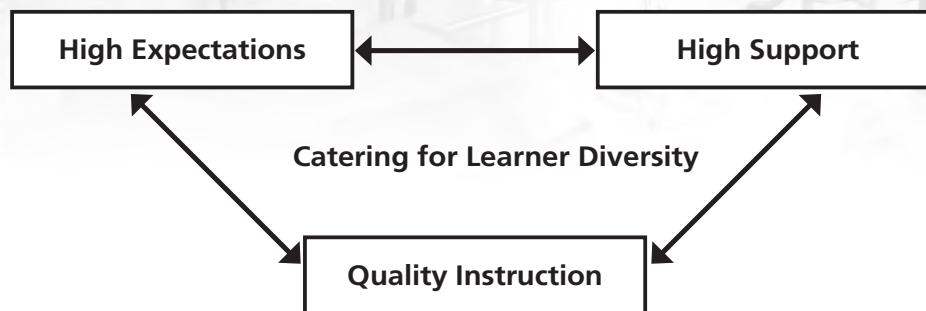
Nevertheless, schools have to realise that there can hardly be a one-size-fits-all approach to addressing learner diversity. To ensure effective learning for all students in the classroom, teachers need to develop sensitivity to individual students' needs and respond to them by flexibly adapting their teaching strategies and content. Teachers can develop such sensitivity through analysing different sources of information (classroom observations, assessments, portfolios, learner profiles, etc.) to find out how each student learns and design an appropriate curriculum for them. With a good grasp of students' characteristics, teachers can turn learner diversity into an asset by capitalising on their different talents, interests and backgrounds brought to the classroom setting. For instance, students can make unique contributions by playing different roles or doing different tasks inside and outside the classroom. Teachers can then give their students opportunities to develop their potential.

#### Expectations

Irrespective of the extent of learner diversity existing in the classroom, to teachers and school leaders, raising students' achievement is imperative. Among different students, lower-achievers have presented the biggest challenge for teachers. By setting low expectations on them and giving them few opportunities to engage actively in activities requiring higher order thinking or application of language and generic skills (e.g. creativity), teachers may sabotage the chance of improving their achievement. For more able students, they also need to stretch their potential. Thus, it is important for schools to set reasonably high expectations on students and provide the right level of support in order to motivate them to make consistent effort in their learning.

#### Instruction

To be able to provide the right level of support, teachers' instruction plays an important role. Quality instruction is reflected by teachers' ability to respond appropriately and flexibly to students' different needs. Teachers adjust their teaching strategies to support individual students' learning. For example, they may use co-operative learning in some tasks and provide multi-sensory stimuli in some other tasks. To exercise such sound judgements, teachers need to possess rich knowledge and skills in using different strategies and content to improve every student's learning and achievement. Such knowledge and skills can help them make professional decisions on the most appropriate teaching strategies to support students under different circumstances.



## School practices

The three school cases offer different insights into how students' diverse needs can be met through strategic curriculum planning, quality instruction and appropriate assessments. In the school cases, clear learning targets and expectations are set for all students at curriculum level so that students have a clear picture of where they are heading and how to make progress. Core and extended teaching content is designed with basic competencies included to ensure that every student can develop essential knowledge and skills and the potential of more able students can be stretched. Greater variety in learning input and output can be incorporated into the school-based curriculum to provide more differentiation for students with diverse needs.

The school cases have also included a number of teaching strategies which are flexibly used based on students' specific needs: explicit teaching of language skills, teachers' quality demonstrations, use of graphic organisers (e.g. story map, five senses), adjusting the level of difficulty of input in a progressive manner, multi-sensory teaching, use of interesting content to engage unmotivated students, experiential learning, differentiated language tasks, assigning different roles to students with different needs in activities, thinking aloud (e.g. use of syntax surgery) to understand the thinking process in reading, etc. Teachers' instruction that attends to learning styles and the needs of students can remove barriers to learning and support individual students to achieve more academically. The assessments (use of success criteria, alternative assessments, differentiated internal examination papers, etc.) illustrated in the school cases are aligned with learning and teaching as a cycle. They are also examples of how teachers can help each student make improvement through assessment for learning.

## Conclusion

Respecting and valuing individual differences means that autonomy is given to all students so that they can make choices to pursue their interests and develop their potential. Schools need to be committed to developing the talent of individual students by providing them with challenging learning opportunities. With a firm belief that there are different pathways for students, teachers are capable of making a difference in each student's learning.

# Supporting the literacy development of diverse learners: From theory to practice

## Background

Literacy skills enable students to read, write and think with independence, comprehension and fluency and these skills are essential for students' success in school and in life. English teachers from Christ College and PAOC Ka Chi Secondary School are aware of the need to support the literacy development of their students starting from their junior years of school; however, they encounter difficulties in teaching literacy skills to students with diverse learning needs. Although students in the junior forms are streamed into different ability groups, teachers find that students' English language abilities vary considerably among classes. Apart from this, students are very diverse in terms of interests, motivations, cognitive abilities, learning styles and readiness levels. As teachers are faced with learner diversity between classes and within classes, they hope to improve learning effectiveness of individual students by employing strategies that cater for their diverse needs.

## Levels

S1-2

## Strategies used and implementation details

When it comes to addressing learner differences, there is no one-size-fits-all approach and strategy. A wide range of effective strategies supported by valid research evidence indicating that intervention works has been tried out in the two schools over the past two years to maximise student learning. The following table outlines some of the strategies adopted by teachers and the reasons why they should be put in place, supplemented with examples of classroom practices showing how these strategies are implemented in the classroom.

Strategy used and rationale	Example of classroom practice and implementation detail
<p><b>I. Giving students an active role in the pre-reading stage to promote active engagement</b></p> <p>Struggling or immature readers are usually passive readers who start reading without preparation and read without knowing why and how to approach a text, while effective readers set a purpose for reading and activate their schema before reading. Being an active reader is important because prior knowledge can help readers become ready to assimilate new information, which in turns improve the chance of a successful learning experience and retention (Wendling &amp; Mather, 2009). It is</p>	<p><b>1. Teaching students how to preview a text</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Before reading a text, teachers trained students to follow some steps to read around the text to get a sense of what it would be about. First, look at the pictures and captions to see what they present. Then, see if there are maps, charts or graphs. Next, look at the titles, headings, and sub-headings to get the big ideas. After that, read the first and last line of each paragraph for more information.</li></ul> <p><b>2. Using KWL to activate prior knowledge and engage students</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- In the Unit "Festivals", before students read the textbook passage, they were asked to write what they already knew about the two festivals in the first column (activating prior knowledge).</li><li>- Students were then asked to write down what they wanted to learn more about the festivals in the second column (having a purpose for reading and active engagement).</li><li>- After reading the text, students wrote what they had learned and shared their ideas with the whole class (active engagement).</li></ul>

Strategy used and rationale	Example of classroom practice and implementation detail																																	
<p>therefore necessary to teach students to set a purpose for reading and to bring their prior knowledge to the reading situation to aid comprehension. It is also essential for students to predict the information to be read as research shows that when students make predictions, their interest in the reading materials and their understanding increase (Beers, 2003).</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>How much do you know about Christmas and Winter Solstice?</b></p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 33%;">What I Know</th> <th style="width: 33%;">What I Want to know</th> <th style="width: 33%;">What I have Learned</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Christmas is in December.</td> <td>Why do we have Christmas?</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>My whole family eat together at Winter Solstice.</td> <td>Why do we eat together?</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p style="text-align: center;">KWL</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Making Predictions</b></p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 60%;">Statements</th> <th style="width: 10%;">YES / NO</th> <th style="width: 10%;">Were you right?</th> <th style="width: 20%;">Paragraph Line</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1. Sang Lan is from Hong Kong.</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>2. Sang Lan is from China.</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>3. Sang Lan hurt herself in an accident.</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>4. Sang Lan was good at sports.</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>5. Sang Lan can never walk again.</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p style="text-align: center;">Prediction Table</p> <p><b>3. Using a Prediction Table to encourage students to make predictions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- After previewing a text but before reading it in depth, students were asked to look at some sentences about the topic and predict if they are true or false using their prior knowledge and the clues they got through previewing the text.</li> <li>- To sustain their interest and concentration, students were asked to check if their predictions were right and find evidence from the text to support their answers after reading each paragraph.</li> </ul>	What I Know	What I Want to know	What I have Learned	Christmas is in December.	Why do we have Christmas?		My whole family eat together at Winter Solstice.	Why do we eat together?		Statements	YES / NO	Were you right?	Paragraph Line	1. Sang Lan is from Hong Kong.				2. Sang Lan is from China.				3. Sang Lan hurt herself in an accident.				4. Sang Lan was good at sports.				5. Sang Lan can never walk again.			
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<p><b>II. Explicit teaching of reading strategies and strategy training</b></p> <p>Research says that students with learning difficulties need explicit instruction. According to various studies (National Reading Panel, 2000; Pressley, 2000), explicitly teaching students even one strategy for comprehending a text can improve their comprehension. Thus, it is necessary for teachers to help students with literacy difficulties to learn how to read and improve reading comprehension through explicit reading instruction.</p>	<p><b>1. Implementing explicit reading strategy instruction</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Teachers followed four steps in helping students develop various reading skills and strategies in reading lessons: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. <b>Direct explanation:</b> Teachers explained to students why the strategy helps comprehension and when to apply the strategy.</li> <li>ii. <b>Modelling:</b> Teachers modelled, or demonstrated, how to apply the strategy, by “thinking aloud” while reading the text that the students were using.</li> <li>iii. <b>Guided practice:</b> It refers to teacher-scaffolded use of the strategies. Teachers guided and assisted students as they learned how and when to apply the strategy.</li> <li>iv. <b>Application:</b> Teachers helped students practise the strategy until they could apply it independently.</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Teachers followed these steps consistently.</li> <li>- Teachers built in opportunities for students to have regular practices in lessons to become more independent readers.</li> </ul>																																	





Strategy used and rationale	Example of classroom practice and implementation detail
<p><b>III. Guiding students to think when reading through syntax surgery</b></p> <p>As reading itself is a thinking process, which can be very complex, think aloud is an effective way for teachers to demonstrate to students how to think when reading. However, some students find it hard just to hear their teacher think through a text and they need to see the teacher's thinking and how she makes connections in the text. Syntax surgery can benefit these learners. It is a way to show learners what good readers do when interacting with the text through lifting text and providing notation during a think-aloud. Through using codes and lifting text, students can see and hear the strategies and skills of reading as the thinking is mapped out on the text (Beers, 2003). Through constant practice with the teacher, students can learn how to think as they read and they can continue reading with understanding on their own.</p>	<p><b>1. Developing reading skills and strategies through syntax surgery</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Before the reading lesson, teachers examined the text to be taught closely to identify the skills or elements of the text that need to be emphasised and decided on what reading skills and strategies students could develop through the text.</li> <li>- During the reading lesson, teachers guided students to interact with the text through lifting text and think-aloud.</li> <li>- Teachers shared the thinking processes explicitly with written marks by identifying connections between ideas and contextual clues like how pronouns were related to nouns and how the context and various linguistic clues could be used to work out the meaning of unknown words and make inferences.</li> <li>- Apart from modelling, teachers guided students to reason through text by engaging them in oral responses.</li> <li>- When students couldn't answer their questions, teachers rephrased their questions and used effective feedback and prompts to guide students to find out clues from the text to answer their questions.</li> <li>- When reasoning through text, teachers cleared up misconceptions, clarified ideas and monitored students' comprehension.</li> <li>- Teachers engaged students in re-readings with different purposes for enhanced comprehension.</li> <li>- Teachers provided opportunities for students to do syntax surgery with a gradual reduction of support from the teacher.</li> </ul> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: flex-end;"> <div data-bbox="603 1339 1002 1668" data-label="Image"> </div> <div data-bbox="1013 1339 1452 1668" data-label="Image"> </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 10px;"> <div data-bbox="694 1675 901 1702" data-label="Caption"> <p>Sample syntax surgery</p> </div> <div data-bbox="1093 1675 1380 1702" data-label="Caption"> <p>Teacher doing syntax surgery</p> </div> </div>



## Strategy used and rationale

### IV. Making meaningful and explicit connections between reading and writing to facilitate learning

One of the ways to teaching students how to learn effectively is through making meaningful connections (Kiewra, 2009) and linking new information to previously learned concepts (Wendling & Mather, 2009). As there is a strong connectedness between reading and writing, numerous reading to write and writing to read activities can be used to facilitate students to develop literacy skills (Hirvela, 2004). To promote reading to write, teachers can design activities that require students to explore the meaningful connections between what they have read and what they are going to write. Since reading provides a rich source of linguistic and rhetorical input for writing, the connection between reading and writing will enable students to acquire vocabulary, grammatical structures of rhetorical features of text and then transfer them to writing.

(B) Complete the timeline below to show what Jenny did on Sunday.

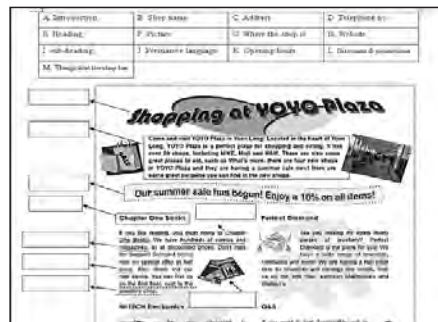
What? Played badminton for 2 hours Where? At the Sports Center Who? My brother and my friend How? That was a lot of fun	9:30 a.m.	What? Met Allison Where? School Station Who? Allison
What? Had lunch Where? Little Tokyo Japanese Restaurant Who? I How? I ate a lot of sushi	lunch	What? Watched Shrek 3 Where? At home Who? I How? I watched it on TV
What? Shopped Where? Golden Center Who? I How? I bought some clothes	in the afternoon	What? Went to the gym Where? The gym Who? I How? I exercised for an hour
What? Cooked dinner Where? In the kitchen Who? I How? I cooked a delicious meal	in the evening	What? Read a book Where? In my room Who? I How? I read for an hour

From reading : completed timeline

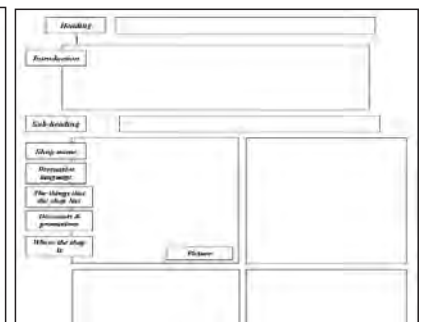
## Example of classroom practice and implementation detail

### 1. Moving from text deconstruction to text construction

- In the Unit "Shopping", before students wrote a pamphlet of a shopping mall, teachers guided students to analyse closely a pamphlet they had read previously in the reading lesson.
- Students deconstructed the pamphlet by digging out the resources that they could transfer to their writing like the overall organisation of the pamphlet, vocabulary, grammar, persuasive language and sentence patterns with the help of a handout.



Text deconstruction



Framework for writing

- After all the components were uncovered, teachers reinforced the teaching of the components and helped students see the connections between what they found in the text and what they would write.
- Students were guided to use the components they had dug out from the pamphlet to design a new shopping mall with the help of a framework that has the same overall organisation.

### 2. Learning how to organise and generate ideas to write from reading

- Before students wrote a diary, teachers revisited the diary students had previously read.
- Teachers guided students to find out what the writer did for the whole day by completing a diagram in the form of a timeline with question prompts like what, who, where, when and how.

My diary

What? My first day at school Where? My school Who? My friends and I How? I was nervous but happy	9:00 a.m.	What? Met Allison Where? School Station Who? Allison
What? Had lunch Where? Little Tokyo Japanese Restaurant Who? I How? I ate a lot of sushi	lunch	What? Watched Shrek 3 Where? At home Who? I How? I watched it on TV
What? Shopped Where? Golden Center Who? I How? I bought some clothes	in the afternoon	What? Went to the gym Where? The gym Who? I How? I exercised for an hour
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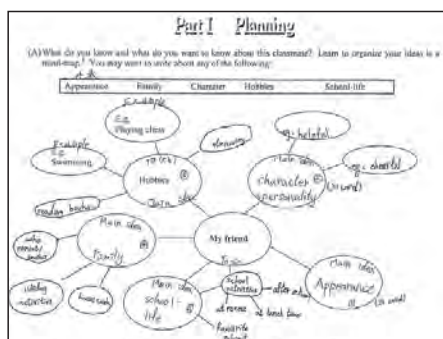
To writing: students' own timeline

- After students completed the diagram, teachers shared with students they could use the same organising framework to plan what they wanted to write in their diary.
- Students were then guided to organise and generate their ideas for their writing using the same timeline with the same prompts.
- Teachers reinforced the teaching of the past tense and text organisation with the reading input before students wrote.

## Strategy used and rationale

### V. Employing a wide range of activities to cater for multiple intelligences, different learning styles and specific learning needs

Gardner (1993) suggests that people have eight different intelligences such as linguistic intelligence and bodily kinesthetic intelligence. While individuals possess strengths in different domains, they also have different learning preferences. For example, auditory learners learn best through hearing, but visual learners learn effectively through visual displays. For students with specific learning, multi-sensory teaching is effective as the coordination of input from all the senses helps them organise and retain their learning. As different people learn best in different situations, teachers need to design activities that appeal to students' different strengths and channel their learning styles to stimulate learning, sustain interest and foster student success.

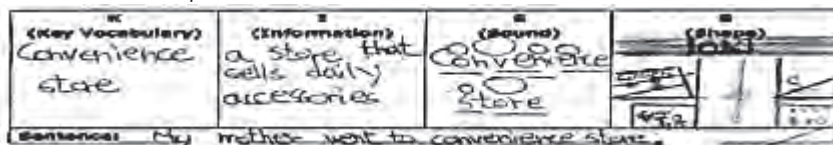


Student learning how to generate ideas using a mind map

## Example of classroom practice and implementation detail

### 1. Using "KISS" to consolidate and retain vocabulary learned in multi-sensory channels

- After learning new words, students filled in the table: KISS stands for: Key vocabulary; Information; Sound; Shape.
- Visual aids "O" and "o" and "\_ \_" help students with stressed and unstressed sounds and syllabication while pictures students draw themselves help them store and retrieve the words learned.



KISS – student work

### 2. Using visual and logical intelligence to plan an itinerary with a map

- In the unit "Nature", apart from using a writing frame to plan when to go, where to go, what to see and do in an itinerary, students were given a map to plan visually where to go first and where to go second. The map also helped them think more logically if the suggested route made sense or not.



Student's map

### 3. Presenting ideas through visual and auditory means

- Teachers used songs, movie clips, realia, and powerpoint slides with animation to enhance learning motivation and efficiency.

### 4. Using graphic organisers to promote logical intelligence effectively

- Students were taught how to use various graphic organisers to summarise or generate ideas in reading and writing lessons.

### 5. Using group activities to promote interpersonal intelligence

- Students played a betting game where they had to discuss with their group members and bet on the given sentences being correct or not.

### 6. Enhancing kinesthetic learners' motivation and participation

- Students participated in a jigsaw activity putting different cards in the correct order to form a notice in the reading lesson. Students decided on what they should write in the introduction, body and conclusion of a notice in the pre-writing lesson by matching the cards in their hands to the board.





**Strategy used and rationale**

**VI. Careful selection and sequence of learning activities to provide better scaffolding through backward planning**

Apart from employing a wide variety of activities, teachers should ensure the activities selected are connected and sequenced in a way that provides a scaffold for individual students to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for achieving the learning outcomes. Scaffolding is of critical importance as it is one important principle that enables teachers to accommodate individual student needs (Kame'enui et.al, 2002). Backward planning is the first step to scaffolding. Teachers should first consider the skills that students need to reach the learning goals and continue to provide scaffolding to bridge students' needs with the learning goals along their learning process.

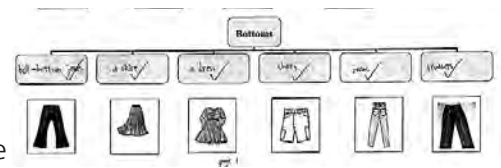
**Example of classroom practice and implementation detail**

**1. Providing a variety of scaffolding activities to prepare students for staging a fashion show**

- In the Unit "Fashion", teachers explicitly shared the expected learning outcomes with students by showing them a clip of a fashion show staged by students from another school.

- To prepare students for the fashion show, it was interspersed with pre-task activities which were carefully sequenced to provide a scaffold for students to progressively build their knowledge and skills. Examples are given below:

- Learning fashion and clothing items through reading and listening
- Using organisers to organise clothing items and adjectives with visuals
- Sounding out and remembering the vocabulary learned using phonics skills
- Learning the order of adjectives through kinesthetic activities
- Drawing and labelling models using the target vocabulary
- Describing their models using the target sentence structures and adjectives
- Learning how to write a fashion script through text deconstruction and using what they had previously learned
- Putting up a mini-fashion show in class and an inter-class fashion show contest in the hall



6. ers / train sneakers  
 7. gan / di / car  
 8. ket / jac



Article	Opinion	Size	Age	Color	Pattern	Material	Item
a	beautiful	big	old	grey	speckled	cotton	T-shirt

Sentence 1: She is wearing a beautiful, big, old, grey, speckled cotton t-shirt.  
 2) He is wearing... she is wearing a beautiful, big, old, grey, speckled, cotton t-shirt.





## Strategy used and rationale

### VII. Using assessment data to inform teaching and learning

Using assessment data is one of the keys to implement effective differentiated teaching. With clear assessment information about students' strengths and weaknesses, teachers can plan accordingly based on what students' differences are, what they know and what they can do and adjust their teaching for their group of students (James & Brown, 1998).

Apart from using assessment information for planning, it should be used as constructive feedback to scaffold student learning. Feedback is most effective when it is timely and directly relates to students' prior learning. This kind of quality feedback will motivate students to move on, help them take more responsibility for their own learning and become more active learners.

## Example of classroom practice and implementation detail

### 1. Making effective use of data to inform instruction and learning

- A pre-test, developed through the adaptation of TSA past papers, was piloted in S1 and S2 to identify strengths and diagnose weaknesses of students' performance in reading, through triangulation with the internal assessment and observational data.
- After identifying the specific reading skills students in different classes were weak in, teachers planned accordingly which skills to develop and what strategies to use in different classes.

Question	1D	1E	IABC1	IABC2	IABC3	IABC4	ALL	Testing Points
PIA-Q1	89%	86%	90%	67%	60%	53%	78%	(3) specific information
PIA-Q2	69%	86%	60%	33%	40%	35%	59%	(4) unknown words
PIA-Q3	19%	73%	43%	11%	25%	29%	36%	(10) connection between ideas
PIA-Q4	61%	54%	50%	26%	25%	29%	44%	(3) specific information
PIA-Q5	47%	43%	30%	30%	25%	18%	35%	(4) unknown words
PIA-Q6	39%	59%	40%	19%	55%	47%	43%	(6) sequencing
PIB-Q1	61%	89%	63%	56%	30%	35%	60%	(4) unknown words

Analysis of pre-test data

- Reading plans were devised with focus questions to help students in different classes develop the reading skills identified.
- Quizzes and tests, with a focus on the identified areas of concern, were set to assess students' progress in reading and to determine if re-teaching was necessary.

### 2. Making use of data to give responsive feedback in post-writing

- After marking students' composition, teachers collated the common mistakes found in students' writing and gave students timely and specific feedback. They re-taught what students could not master to help them overcome their specific weaknesses.

Writing feedback – My Friend

Correct the following sentences.

- I think she was a pretty girl in our class.  
*I think she is a pretty girl in our class.* ✓
- She also helpful because she always helps her teachers and classmates.  
*She is helpful because she always helps her teachers and classmates.* ✓
- He often do homework.  
*He often does homework.* ✓

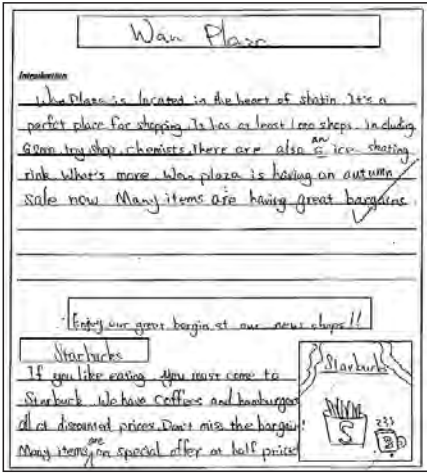
Students corrected common mistakes found in their class in post-writing lesson.

Strategy used and rationale	Example of classroom practice and implementation detail
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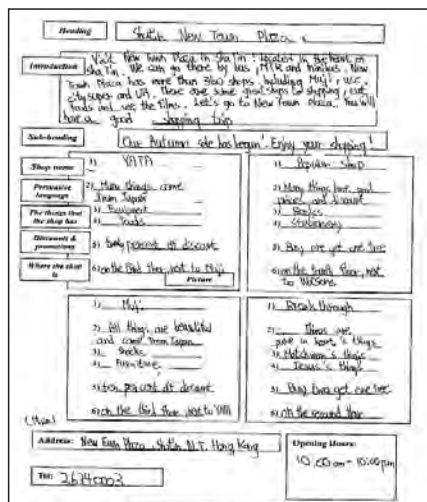
**VIII. Variation in the input, process and product**

According to Tomlinson (1999), the learning, content, process, product can be differentiated to create different learning experiences for students with different abilities, readiness, interests and learning preferences.

To put this in practice, teachers need to understand students' learning needs to vary the learning objectives, expand or reduce the learning content, adjust the instructional materials and the demands of the expected output accordingly.



Introducing 2 shops in a pamphlet



Introducing 4 shops in a pamphlet

**1. Varying the content to be covered**

- When planning the units, teachers varied what students needed to learn to match their readiness and abilities. For example, the less able classes were taught one reading text and the core reading skills and vocabulary only while the stronger classes were taught the core and extended vocabulary and reading skills and two reading texts.
- How much grammatical information different classes would receive was also varied. In the Unit "Fashion", less able students were taught how to put only three different types of adjectives in a correct order while more able students were taught how to put more than three types of adjectives in a correct order.

**2. Varying the teaching and learning process**

- i. Varying the instructional materials
  - The textbook passages were simplified by reducing the complexity of syntactic structures and adding more contextual clues to them.
  - Some worksheets were graded and students could choose the levels of challenge they wanted to work at.
- ii. Varying the teaching approaches
  - Students sat in groups in reading lessons and competed to answer questions when the teacher was doing syntax surgery.
  - Cooperative learning was used. Each student in a group was given a number. When the teacher called a number, students having the same number needed to answer a question or do a task immediately.
- iii. Varying the learning activities and tasks
  - Different activities like miming games, information gap activities were used depending on students' needs.

**3. Varying the demands of the expected output**

- In the Unit "Shopping", students with higher cognitive, linguistic abilities and motivation were required to include four shops in their pamphlets while less able students were only required to include two shops.

## Impact on teaching and learning

With teachers' concerted effort, students' **learning motivation and learning efficiency have been enhanced**. Teachers noticed that students became more actively involved in class activities. The Unit on "Fashion" was very well-received in both schools and students were able to demonstrate their learning through different activities. The inter-class fashion show contest in Christ College was a big success, and teachers were delighted to see that both the more able and less able students were well prepared for the show. Students were also more engaged in reading lessons. They participated more actively in oral responses when teachers asked them to think for the answers during reading, and the more able students were able to look for evidence to support their answers. Even when students had difficulty in understanding a text, they were more willing to interact with it and make guesses instead of giving it all up.

With the use of different teaching and learning strategies, students have made **improvement in both reading and writing**. From teachers' observations and internal assessment data, students were able to master some essential but basic reading strategies that help them improve their reading comprehension, such as identifying main ideas. Even the weaker learners mastered some basic reading skills like following pronoun references and locating specific information. From the analysis of students' writing, their work improved in terms of content and organisation. Students were able to write longer texts and they showed a better understanding of the features and organisation of different text types.

Teachers' **repertoire of strategies to cater for learner diversity has expanded**. In their reflections, they shared that they have gained more insights into differentiated instruction. They have also gained more confidence and experience in using a wider range of teaching strategies to suit the needs of different learners. Encouraged by students' positive responses, they are convinced that devoting time to planning a differentiated curriculum is a worthy endeavor, which will certainly help students move more smoothly on the road to the senior secondary curriculum.

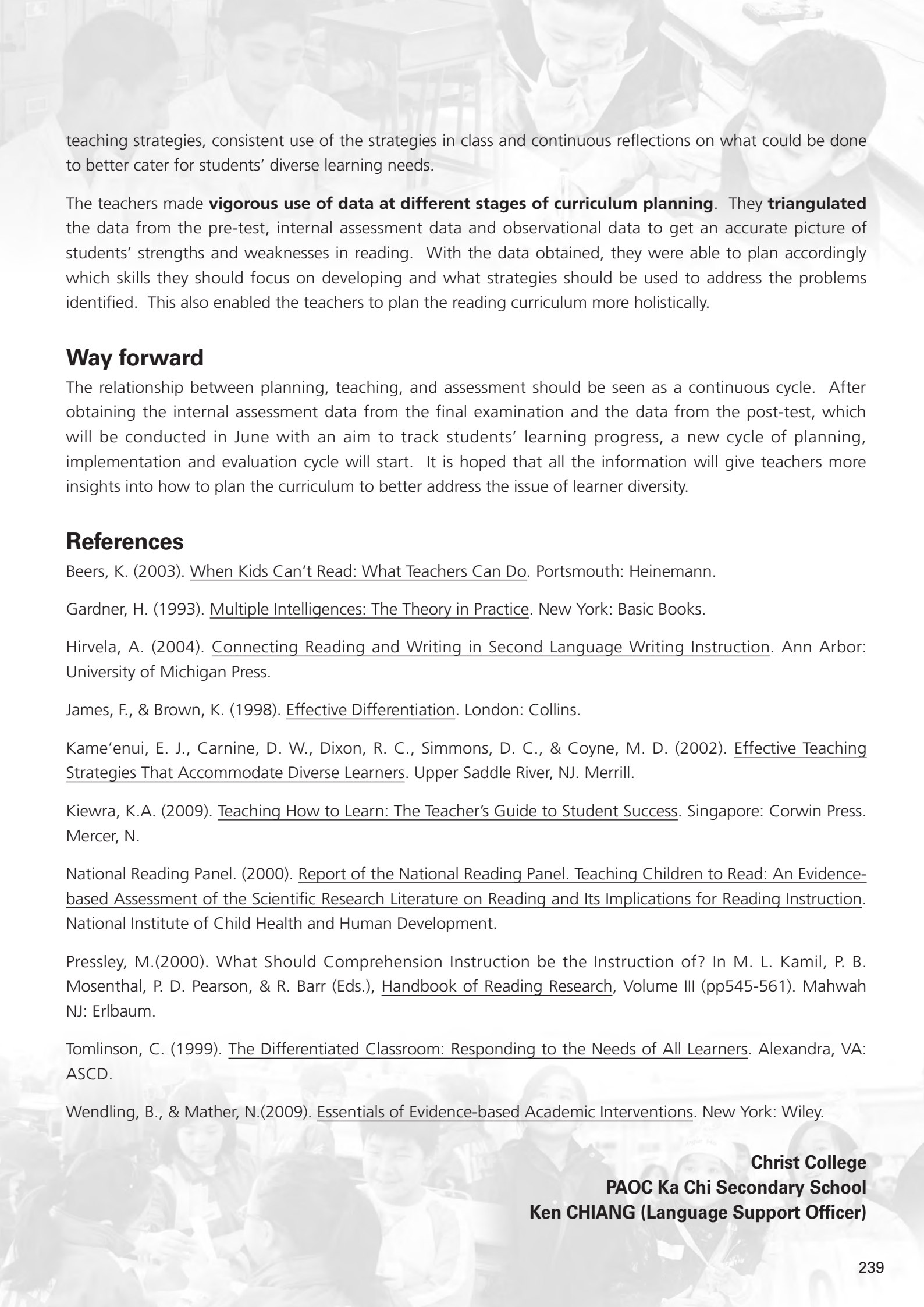
Teachers have gained a better understanding of how to teach **reading skills and strategies explicitly** and they have come to realise the importance of establishing meaningful links between reading and writing to help students become better writers. The collaboration has also enhanced teachers' assessment literacy. Teachers now are more inclined to use different types of data to reflect on teaching and learning and they can design quality assessment tasks with reference to the Basic Competency (BC) descriptors to inform teaching and learning.

## Facilitating Factors

The principals and panel chairpersons were **supportive** to the collaborating teachers and **space was created for them to differentiate the school-based curriculum**. The collaborative planning periods facilitated the teachers to plan each unit in detail. With an understanding that teachers should not rush through the curriculum at the expense of student learning, flexibility was allowed for the teachers to exercise their professional judgment in varying the learning content, process and product according to students' needs and abilities, which brought about more effective teaching and learning.

Collaboration would not have been possible without the involvement of **enthusiastic teachers who hold a firm belief that maximising individual students' potential is their major responsibility**. They devoted time and effort to planning and implementing a differentiated curriculum, and monitoring and evaluating the progress of students. The success of the collaboration is also attributed to teachers' open-mindedness to new





teaching strategies, consistent use of the strategies in class and continuous reflections on what could be done to better cater for students' diverse learning needs.

The teachers made **vigorous use of data at different stages of curriculum planning**. They **triangulated** the data from the pre-test, internal assessment data and observational data to get an accurate picture of students' strengths and weaknesses in reading. With the data obtained, they were able to plan accordingly which skills they should focus on developing and what strategies should be used to address the problems identified. This also enabled the teachers to plan the reading curriculum more holistically.

## Way forward

The relationship between planning, teaching, and assessment should be seen as a continuous cycle. After obtaining the internal assessment data from the final examination and the data from the post-test, which will be conducted in June with an aim to track students' learning progress, a new cycle of planning, implementation and evaluation cycle will start. It is hoped that all the information will give teachers more insights into how to plan the curriculum to better address the issue of learner diversity.

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**Christ College  
PAOC Ka Chi Secondary School  
Ken CHIANG (Language Support Officer)**

# Supporting junior secondary students with different language abilities and needs for the NSS

## Background

Teachers of this school have shown much concern about meeting the diverse needs of more able, average and less able students at junior secondary level and improving their language skills in order to prepare them for the NSS. They have tried to cater for students' different needs and help them build a firm foundation through effective curriculum planning, specific learning and teaching strategies and assessment.

## Levels

S1-3

## Strategies used

### Curriculum planning

#### 1. Include language arts and non-language arts elements in the formal and informal curricula to provide more variety for students with different interests and learning styles

Language arts (LA) and non-language arts (non-LA) elements have been progressively included at junior secondary level to cater for students with different interests and learning styles and prepare them for the Elective Part in the NSS. Instead of relying solely on textbook materials, teachers use LA and non-LA text types and activities to motivate students to learn English inside and outside the classroom. The following LA and non-LA elements have been included in S1-S3 to provide students with more variety in learning content and activities:

Level	Formal curriculum		Informal curriculum
	LA	Non-LA	Non-LA
S1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short stories</li> <li>• Drama</li> </ul>	Workplace English (buying & selling)	Olympics Fair with a focus on buying and selling of souvenirs and introducing tourist spots in Hong Kong
S2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poems</li> <li>• Fables</li> </ul>	Workplace English (ordering goods)	/
S3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poems &amp; songs</li> </ul>	Workplace English (hotel check in)	An activity on hotel English

## 2. Include core and extended learning content in S1-S3 curriculum plans to meet students' different needs and abilities

To stretch every student's potential, teachers often include differentiated content in every unit at junior secondary level based on three levels of difficulty - level one (with one asterisk\*) for all students, level two (with two asterisks\*\*) for average students and level three (with three asterisks\*\*\*) for more able students. Basic competencies (BCs) for every unit have also been progressively included in the S3 whole-year plan to ensure that every student can develop important language skills in a step-by-step manner.



BCs included in one of the units

Unit 6: What's your personality?

Activities	Resources	Methods	Workbooks	Learning & Integrated Skills	Grammar	Read & Write	Lang. Apps	Features
Word building	P.20, P.21, P.22, P.23, P.24	P.19	P.20, P.21, P.22, P.23	P.20, P.21, P.22, P.23				Discussion
Reading	P.4	P.2, P.3, P.5						Discussion
Language Items	Focus and past participles as adjectives	P.11, P.12	P.6	P.4C1, P.4C2	E21, E22, W21, W22		Supp. 1, Supp. 2	
Language Items	Focus participles as phrases	P.14	P.8	P.6, P.7, P.8				
Language Items	Consolidation	P.15						
Language Items	Writing (personality and life coverage)	P.9	P.9, P.10, P.11	P.4C3		WB P.9		Choice of
Language Items	Speaking	P.7	P.7, P.8, P.9	P.6				Revising
Language Items								WB P.10

Three levels of differentiated content for different ability groups

## Learning and teaching strategy

### 1. Make use of experiential learning to maximise different students' potential

In this school, teachers maximise students' potential through extending their learning outside the classroom. For example, two large-scale co-curricular activities, "Olympics Fair" and "Places to Stay for World Travellers" were held in 2007-2008 for S1 students and in 2009-2010 for S3 students. These activities were based on two extended units covered in the classroom. More able, average and less able students were given tasks with different cognitive and linguistic demands. Both activities focused on workplace English and involved all classes at one level. Students with different needs and abilities benefited differently from such experiential learning. Students with a kinesthetic learning style were very motivated to learn English through such a hands-on experience. Weak students showed improvement in their confidence whereas more able and average students could apply their skills in authentic and complex contexts. Students with different abilities were able to use workplace English in the activities with different levels of proficiency in order to achieve differentiated learning outcomes.



Two co-curricular activities "Olympics Fair" (S1) and "Places to Stay for World Travellers" (S3) on workplace English have been held.





## 2. Design co-curricular activities with different expectations of students to help them make progress at their own pace

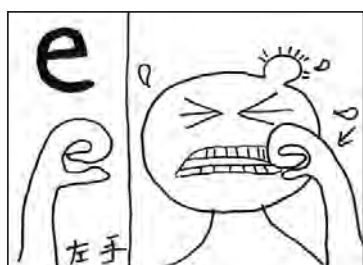
To prepare for the two co-curricular English activities conducted in 2007 and 2009, "Olympics Fair" and "Places to Stay for World Travellers", easier and more difficult training packages were designed for students with different abilities. Outside the classroom, they were expected to apply language skills and workplace English with different levels of sophistication. More able and average students had to take up the role of hotel receptionists, salesmen or tourist guides and perform demanding tasks in a workplace context. Less able students performed easier tasks. A variety of roles (e.g. ushers, customers, Olympic ambassadors, little tourist guides and supervisors in the S1 activity, and receptionists, concierges, customers, bell boys, salespersons and supervisors in the S3 activity) with different levels of challenge were assigned to students with different language abilities and needs. Awards were also given to students playing different roles to recognise their achievements in the activities.



Awards to recognise students' different achievements

## 3. Design differentiated classroom tasks to meet the needs of students with different starting points

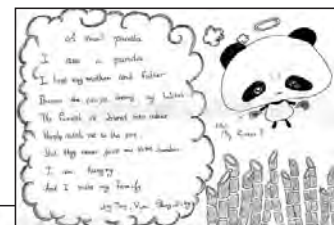
To help less able students develop very basic skills such as developing an awareness of vowel sounds, syllables, phrases and clauses in sentences, teachers often use different colours to highlight vowel sounds, individual syllables in words and different parts (e.g. subject, verb, object, connectives and important phrases) in sentences. They also use funny pictures to aid their memory and provide them with more visual stimulation. In helping less able students create fables last year, teachers encouraged them to draw pictures to plan their stories. More S2 able and average students read poems written from an animal's and a master's point of view. More able students also created their own poems using rhyming words and personification.



S1 Less able students learn vowel sounds through gestures and pictures.



A fable created by a less able student



A poem created by a more able student

## Assessment

### 1. Include differentiation in the examination papers by designing easy and difficult parts as options for students with different language abilities

In designing examination papers, teachers include a core part for all students and an easier as well as a more difficult part for different students to choose. The easy and difficult parts carry different marks similar to the design of some of the papers in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education. With more differentiation in the examination papers, teachers can cater for the needs of more able, average and less able students. More able students still find the questions challenging whereas weak students find them manageable and can obtain a sense of achievement.

### 2. Provide different success criteria for assessing different students' performance

Different success criteria were used for students taking up different roles in the co-curricular activities "Olympic Fair" and "Places to Stay for World Travellers". 56 students who played the role of supervisors gave ratings and comments on their subordinates' performance. Students playing the role of customers also gave ratings and comments on the services offered to them.

## What happened

The following shows an example of a unit with a focus placed on how to cater for learner diversity and prepare different students for the Elective Part (e.g. the elective module "Learning English through Workplace Communication") in the NSS.

Level: S3 (2009-10)		
Extended unit of the core unit "World Travellers": Places to Stay for World Travellers		
Purpose	Lesson	Activity & task done (the shaded box refers to learning outside the classroom)
Know the hotel context	1-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students learned unit objectives and the success criteria for the extended unit.</li> <li>Students watched a video clip on hotel reception as a lead-in activity and brainstormed hotel-related vocabulary items in class.</li> <li>Students learned names of different jobs in a hotel setting &amp; the proper ways to serve customers.</li> </ul>
How to serve your customers	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students learned customers' common questions and used some short dialogues for practice.</li> <li>In pairs, students played different roles (more challenging roles such as receptionists, customers and concierges were assigned to more able &amp; average students whereas less challenging roles such as security guides and bell boys were assigned to less able students) using the short dialogues given.</li> <li>Students acted out the dialogues in class. Teacher and peers gave feedback.</li> </ul>

Learn how to check in & build a positive image for the hotel	2	<p>The following part was learned by strong and average classes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students learned check-in procedures.</li> <li>• In pairs, students practised and acted out the check-in dialogue. They acted out the dialogue in class.</li> <li>• Students read the memo sent by the General Manager of the hotel and learned how to improve the quality of their services.</li> <li>• Students discussed how front office staff members can improve services.</li> <li>• Students learned the criteria for appraising the performance of receptionists and concierges.</li> </ul>
Welcome customers arriving at Catholic Ming Yuen Hotel	2 hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All students listened to the briefing given by supervisors and the General Manager. (56 students)</li> <li>• Students played different roles at Catholic Ming Yuen Hotel. They performed different tasks and gave feedback on the services afterwards.</li> </ul> <p><b>The different roles played by students:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Supervisors (more able students)</li> <li>- Receptionists (more able students)</li> <li>- Concierges (more able &amp; average students)</li> <li>- Customers (more able &amp; average students)</li> <li>- Bell boys (less able students)</li> <li>- Security guards (less able students)</li> </ul>

## Impact

1. More able and average students found the learning content and activities suitably challenging whereas less able students were able to complete the tasks that had been designed especially for them. It was found that a greater variety of activities and more differentiation in learning content such as including language arts and non-language arts elements in the curriculum design could cater for the varied learning styles and needs of students. Even students with special educational needs could create their own fables with pictures drawn to show the themes of their written work. More able and average students created very interesting poems from the point of view of an animal.
2. More able, average and even less able students all participated very actively in the co-curricular activities "Olympics Fair" and "Places to Stay for World Travellers" to apply workplace English and prepare for the Elective Part in the NSS. Despite their varied needs and abilities, they found their English learning experiences very meaningful and enjoyable as they could have a taste of workplace English in authentic situations.
3. There was much peer learning in the learning process. More able students were able to support weaker students to develop more confidence in using English in the activities. Students with different abilities could benefit from English activities by playing different roles assigned to them. Different ability groups also found the different success criteria manageable and showed confidence in achieving them.
4. Through better curriculum design and more differentiation in teaching strategies, content and assessments, English teachers developed more confidence in tackling the issue of learning diversity and preparing students with different language abilities for the NSS.





## **Facilitating factors**

### **Teachers' willingness to make flexible adjustments in curriculum design, teaching strategies and assessments**

Teachers have shown willingness to take a very positive step towards addressing the issue of learner diversity by extending students' learning beyond the textbook. Teachers enriched all students' learning by introducing a variety of learning materials, activities and authentic experiences related to workplace English; and supported the learning of different groups by assigning different roles to them, designing different assessment tasks and setting different success criteria. All these took extra time and efforts.

### **Making varied cognitive and linguistic demands on students with different starting points to help them improve and prepare for the NSS**

In designing different English tasks and activities, teachers have set different expectations of students by adjusting the level of difficulty appropriately to suit their linguistic level. Thus, students with different starting points could make progress at different speeds. This greatly motivated less able students to learn and will hopefully contribute towards sustaining all students' interest in learning English at senior secondary levels in the future.

### **School's culture of valuing diversity and students as individuals**

Teachers at this school often show much love and patience in teaching less able students, especially those with special educational needs. They are willing to do a lot of extra work to help them develop basic language skills and confidence in learning English. Both the Principal and the teachers share a common goal of providing maximum learning opportunities for every student. Premising on this shared goal, a direction of curriculum development has been set, i.e. to offer varieties in the learning content and methods; and to set different expectations and to provide support for different ability groups, including those with special educational needs.

## **Difficulties and suggestions**

At this school, teachers have explored different aspects to cater for learner diversity including curriculum design, learning and teaching strategies and assessment methods. However, they have found it challenging to create enough space to work on these different areas at the same time. With some experience gained in handling the issue of learner diversity, it is expected that they may concentrate more on effective approaches and modify those approaches that were not so effective in the past. A curriculum review may be conducted at Key Stage 3 and school-based experiences in catering for learner diversity over the years can be conceptualised to develop a quality school-based junior secondary English Language curriculum that can support the varied needs of students and prepare them for the NSS. The next challenge is perhaps how the needs and potential of the students can be addressed and further stretched at senior secondary levels.

## **Reference**

The Curriculum Development Council. (2002). *English Language Education: KLA Curriculum Guide (P1-S3)*. HKSAR: The Education Department.

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# Catering for learner diversity in the context of the NSS

## Background

Learner diversity in the context of the NSS has become an acute issue to be resolved by teachers at senior secondary level. In the old “3+3+2” system with about a third of students proceeding to the matriculation level, the ability range was narrower and senior students in general were more motivated. Now that all students receive six years of secondary education, some teachers are facing a big challenge – addressing diversity in students’ motivation and ability.

This article shares the experience of two schools in coping with the challenges of learner diversity. STFA Seaward Woo College focusses on the strategies which the English Department has adopted to stretch the potential of average and higher ability students. Yuen Long Catholic Secondary School focusses on how teachers have motivated and improved their students’ English standards.

## Levels

S4-5

## Strategies used and what happened

### Differentiated instruction

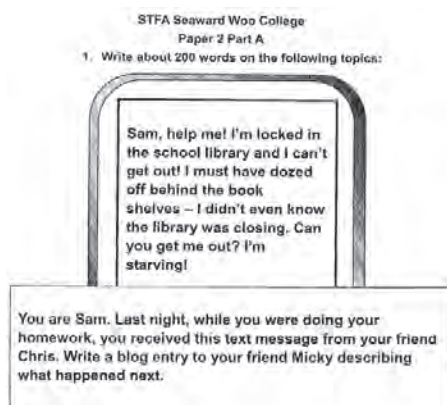
Tomlinson (1999) suggests that the key content and skills students learn should remain steady. Trimming down the curriculum may deprive less proficient students’ right to learn the essentials. Instead, it is necessary for teachers to differentiate their instruction according to students’ readiness, interest and learning profile to help them achieve the learning targets. Clear learning targets allow teachers and students to see where the destination is.

## School Case 1: STFA Seaward Woo College


### 1. Holistic Planning to create space for differentiated instruction

Related components in the Compulsory and Elective Parts were aligned. Elective components were infused into each module or textbooks to create time and space for teachers to differentiate their instructions.

Compulsory Part	Elective Part
<p>1. Reading a sci-fi “The Diminisher” (Anthology)</p> <p>2. Writing a blog entry – Your friend was locked in the school library and he sent you a message to ask you to rescue him</p>	<p><b>Learning English through Short Stories</b></p> <p>Using the sci-fi “The Diminisher” as the context to introduce</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ways of narration</li><li>• functions of dialogues</li><li>• rules of writing good dialogues</li></ul>



## 2. Differentiating instruction flexibility to help individual students achieve different learning targets

Strategy used	What happened
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing opportunities for students to apply the knowledge and skills</li> <li>• Teaching in small steps</li> <li>• Using a variety of strategies to help students tackle the writing questions                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- graphic organisers</li> <li>- repetition</li> <li>- explicit teaching</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Establishing routines</li> <li>• Adjusting teacher support according to students' readiness</li> <li>• Making use of scaffolding tasks which help students who require extra help</li> <li>• Providing students with clear learning targets and clear assessment criteria</li> </ul>	<p><b>Pre-writing stage</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The writing questions were carefully chosen. Students were able to apply the knowledge and skills of the Elective Part which were introduced right before they were given the writing tasks.</li> <li>2. Teachers did task analysis and broke the writing tasks into 8 steps. Teachers demonstrated the steps until the students could eventually pick them up and use them as routine. As the goal was to develop students into independent learners, teachers gradually removed the amount of support given to students. The same steps and graphic organisers (different graphic organisers for social issues &amp; short stories) were given to students every time they did their writing.</li> <li>3. For weaker groups, more scaffolding tasks were given to them to prepare them for the writing. Each group might have different scaffolding tasks as students' weaknesses and strengths differed.</li> <li>4. A <b>Feedback Form</b> (designed by teachers) was given to students before they started writing. Assessment criteria were clearly listed. Elective elements were included. There were different criteria for writing questions on different electives. Students knew that was expected of them and what they could do to achieve higher levels.</li> </ol> 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing students with vocabulary of different levels of difficulty</li> <li>• Making use of elective related materials to create contexts for provoking thinking with regard to language use</li> <li>• Allowing students to make choices to pursue their own interests</li> <li>• Using students' work to help them appreciate good ideas/work and motivate students to make improvement</li> </ul>	<p><b>Post-writing stage</b></p> <p>In the <b>feedback session</b>, teachers used the feedback form to give constructive feedback. By reading teachers' rating and comments, students knew their strengths and weaknesses and the areas they could improve. Bonus marks were given to students who were able to apply the focus elective components in their writing.</p> <p><b>Task 1: Students proofread the verb forms to improve their language (L)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students were given a table with different categories of common mistakes (verbs) and a piece of writing of their classmates to spot one mistake for each category from the writing. More able groups worked individually whereas average students worked in pairs or groups. <u>OR</u></li> <li>• Students filled in the blanks with correct forms of verbs. They showed the teachers the answers once they had finished. Teachers told them which answers were wrong and they went back to correct the mistakes. This was done until five students got the answers all correct. (A boring grammar exercise was turned into a competition/game. Students also got chances to correct their own mistakes.)</li> </ul>



- Using a variety of activities to cater for students with different learning styles (visual, auditory and kinesthetic)
- Providing students with clear expectations by giving different exemplars of good writing

**A. Use of dialogues (feeling / tone)**

**Dialogue 1**  
 "Don't you know that the only way to help you out is to call the police?" I told Chris calmly.  
 What was the feeling of the speaker?

**Dialogue 2**  
 "It was certainly a lesson I will never forget..." Chris said.  
 What is the tone of the narrator?

**Dialogue 3**  
 "Oh! Thank God! You're finally here," screamed Chris.  
 What was the feeling of the speaker?

**Dialogue 4**  
 "If I had believed Chris and had brought him some food, he would not have to be in hospital."  
 What is the tone of the speaker?

**Dialogue 5**  
 "I should have believed him! I should have brought him some food! I should have got him out of the library..."  
 What is the feeling of the speaker?

**Dialogue 6**  
 "I'm so sorry that I didn't believe you... It's inexcusable!"  
 What is the tone of the speaker?

**Dialogue 7**  
 "Suddenly, something grasped my shoulder! I clenched my fists and turned around. Gosh! She was our justice!"  
 What is the emotion of the speaker? (underline the correct option(s))  
 (amused    thrilled    angry    relieved)

**Dialogue 8**  
 "Ready? 1, 2, 3! Bump! Hurray! We did it!"  
 What is the tone of the speaker?

**B. Use of dialogues (personality)**

**Dialogue 1**  
 "Well, I'll bring you 100 hamburgers! But you have to pay me back." I laughed.  
 What was the personality of the speaker?  
 What was the relationship between the two characters?  
 (family / business / friends )

**Dialogue 2**  
 "Hey, it's no big deal. Come on! Take it easy!"  
 What is the personality of the speaker?

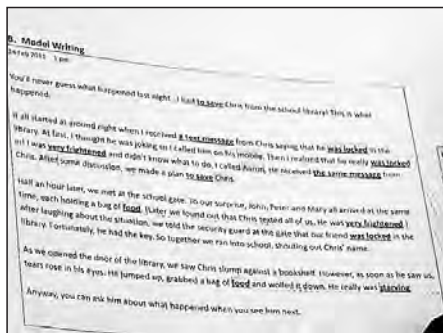
**Adjectives**

helpful	willing to help	thrilled	uncertain
sarcasmic	serious	reflective	humorous
angry	relieved	bad	amused
condemning	apologetic	obedient	sorry
guilty	anxious	excited	

Dialogues (Students' work)

### Task 2: Replacing words with synonyms to avoid repetition

(i) Students were given a piece of sample writing to read. For weaker groups, the writing was divided into chunks and students were asked to sequence the chunks. (kinesthetic)



(ii) The repeated words were highlighted (was locked, mobile, starving, food). Students replaced them with synonyms. The sophistication of vocabulary varied according to students' ability.

### Task 3: Using dialogues to improve content (C) and language (L)

- Functions of dialogues were revised.
- Students identified the speakers' tone, feelings and personality in some dialogues (including some students' work). (Pre-taught/revised the adjectives describing tone, feelings and personality if necessary.)

Variation of the task:

- Students were invited to read aloud/act out the dialogue with appropriate tone and emotions. (kinesthetic)
  - The dialogues were recorded and played in class for students to identify the speakers' tone, feelings and personality. (auditory)
  - Students were asked to visualise the dialogues. (visual)
- (iii) Students were asked to select at least one dialogue and inserted it/them into the sample writing.

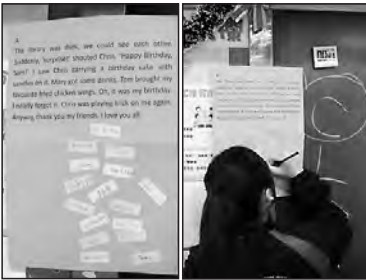
### Task 4: Working out a surprising ending to improve content (C) and organisation (O)

- Posters with different endings were stuck around the classroom. Students read all the endings and put a sticker on the poster with their favourite ending. (kinesthetic) OR
- Discussion: Each group came up with their favourite ending with justification.

Some of the endings:

- ~ It was the April Fool's Day...
- ~ The library was dark. We could not see each other. Suddenly, 'Surprised!' shouted Chris. 'Happy Birthday, Sam!' I saw Chris carrying a birthday cake with candles on it. Mary got some drinks. Tom brought my favourite fried chicken wings. Chris was playing a trick on me again. Anyway, thank you my friends. I love you all.
- ~ When I woke up the next day, I received a message from Chris again, 'A friend in need is a friend indeed'.
- ~ I was so happy to see Chris in the library. Suddenly, BANG! The library door closed again with the key staying outside. Both Chris and I were locked again. Who should we call now?





### For weaker classes

Teachers could pick a few endings and polish them with students before showing them to other students. (E.g. if ideas could be further developed, teachers could guide the writers to do so; if language was the problem, teachers could guide the writer to proofread.)

e.g. A student's work:

"Mary was locked in the library. She found a mobile phone. Sam's number was the only number she could find in the phone and so Mary sent him a message."

The teacher discussed with the student whether the idea was logical and finally the student came up with the following ending:

"When I arrived at the library, I couldn't find Chris but Mary, who kept dating me out in the previous weeks. Have been rejected by me several times, Mary borrowed my friend Chris' phone and made up such "a rescue plan". Oh! My God! Will anyone save me?"

### Extended task for higher ability students

- Using more complex sentence structure: present participle phrases

- Revisiting the knowledge and skills to allow students to learn at their own pace

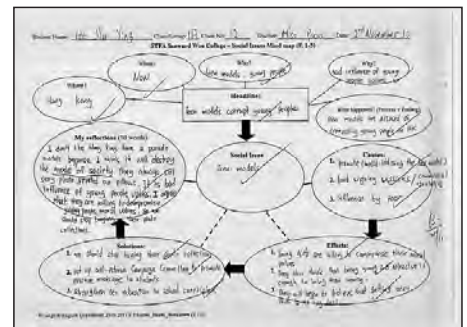
### Assignment

Effective use of assignments can enhance and consolidate classroom learning and teaching (develop knowledge, skills and attitudes, foster students' ability and self-discipline to work independently).

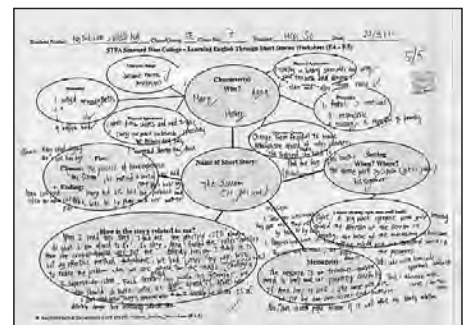
Instead of doing newspaper cutting exercises like writing a summary and feelings about the news and checking meanings for a few new vocabulary items, students completed the social issues worksheets after reading the news articles.

Instead of writing book reports, students completed the short stories worksheets after reading stories.

If students missed out or were not ready for some parts, they always had a chance to revisit the knowledge and skills when they were ready.



A social issues worksheet: headline, using 5W questions to summarise the news, related social issues, causes, effects, solutions of the issues and reflections



A short stories worksheet: characters (personality, appearance, character change); setting (when, where, 5 senses); plot (climax, ending); message(s); how is the story related to me?



## Facilitating factors and impact

1. The curriculum team worked with concerted efforts in creating curriculum space and time for effective teaching and learning by aligning related components in the Compulsory and Elective Parts.
2. Each S4 & S5 English teacher took up a part in each module. Their passion and commitment is the key to cope with the workload brought by differentiated instructions. Collaborative lesson planning lessons allowed teachers to plan, evaluate the curriculum together and share their teaching strategies to stretch the students' potentials. Through lesson observation, teachers were able to see how different strategies worked on different groups of students.
3. Students got the direction and entry points (components in the Elective Part) of improving their own performance by referring to the HKDSE rubrics, marking scheme and the feedback forms designed by teachers. Most of them knew how to improve a piece of writing by working on three domains: content, language and organisation. Most students showed improvement in the content and organisation domains. This was reflected in students' work, internal assessment results and learning attitude in class.

## School Case 2: Yuen Long Catholic Secondary School

### 1. Selection of elective modules

Based on students' readiness and interests, elective modules Learning English through Short Stories, Drama and Workplace Communication were selected following the principles below:

- i) Strong links with the Compulsory Part
- ii) Alignment with the HKDSE requirements
- iii) Relevance to students' life
- iv) Students' interest
- v) Manageable for students

### 2. Rationale for curriculum and learning/teaching design

The curriculum was designed in a way that adaptations could be made to support struggling learners (with more scaffolding tasks) and stretch the potential of more able learners (with challenging part). Weaker ones could also be exempted from some parts. The materials, activities and tasks were designed in a way to arouse the learners' interests. The knowledge and skills covered were the essential ones.

Some strategies were adopted:

- Curriculum tailoring: choice of materials of different levels of difficulties
- Systematic instructions
- Breaking down of teaching processes into smaller steps
- Progression of difficulty
- Use of multi-sensory activities and/or resources





- Selecting materials related to students' everyday life and students' future career to cater for individual needs
- Learning through activities
- Linking the knowledge and skills covered in the Elective Part to those in the Core Part

## Part II Job hunting

Students were interested in the job hunting part. They knew that they would have to look for one sooner or later. The following topics were covered:

- Job advertisements
- Application forms
- Cover letters (optional)
- Resumes
- Interviews

Students did not have public exam results, testimonials or work experience. This made it difficult for them to write their own resumes, cover letters or fill in the job application forms. Teachers decided to link this activity with Paper 3 in the Compulsory Part in which students were required to read the data file, locate and draw relevant information to fill in forms or write letters. They gave the students a situation:

Your friend, Raymond Lam is going to apply for the job of Customer Service Assistant at Yuen Long Plaza. Read the information and documents below and help him fill in the application form and write his CV and cover letter.

The template of ID card, job advertisement, public exam result slip, school testimonial, certificate and application form looked authentic. Students were thrilled to read Raymond's documents and were curious about his background. They were engaged in reading the documents.

**Example**  
Raymond is going to apply for a job of Customer Service Assistant at Yuen Long Plaza. Read the information and documents below. Fill in the application form, draw up a CV and cover letter for Raymond Lam.

**Raymond Lam's Identity Card**

**Job Advertisement from Ming Pao**

**Yuen Long Plaza**

**Customer Service Assistant**

**Job Description:**

- To provide excellent customer service to our customers.
- To ensure that all customer enquiries are handled efficiently.
- To ensure that all customer complaints are handled promptly.
- To ensure that all customer feedback is recorded and reported to the relevant departments.

**Requirements:**

- At least 18 years old.
- Good English speaking skills.
- Good communication skills.
- Good customer service skills.
- Good team spirit.
- Good attitude.

**Benefits:**

- Comprehensive employee benefits package.
- Training and development opportunities.
- Career advancement opportunities.

**Application:**

Interested candidates should send their resumes and application forms to: **HR@YLP.COM.HK**

(This content will be used for an actual recruitment.)

**Application Form**  
Position Applied For:

**Personal Particulars**

Name (English): \_\_\_\_\_  
Name (Chinese): \_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_  
Sex:  Male /  Female  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

**Educational Background**  
School Attended:

From	To	Name of School	Major Award / Achievement

**Public Examination**  
HKCEE / HKCEE / HKALE Results:

Subject	Grade	Subject	Grade

**Other Skills**  
Computer Skills:  None  MS Word  MS Excel  MS PowerPoint  Other (specify): \_\_\_\_\_  
Languages Spoken:  Cantonese  English  Putunghese  Other (specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**Raymond Lam's Public Examination Result Slip**  
HONG KONG DIPLOMA OF SECONDARY EDUCATION EXAMINATION RESULTS NOTICE

Subject	Subject Grade	Component Grade	School
CHINESE LANGUAGE	2 (75%)	1 (75%)	YUEN LONG CATHOLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL
• WRITING		1 (75%)	
• LISTENING		1 (75%)	
• SPEAKING		1 (75%)	
• INTEGRATED SKILLS		1 (75%)	
• SCHOOL-BASED ASSESSMENT		1 (75%)	
ENGLISH LANGUAGE	3 (70%)	2 (70%)	
• READING		2 (70%)	
• WRITING		2 (70%)	
• LISTENING AND INTEGRATED SKILLS		2 (70%)	
• SPEAKING		2 (70%)	
• SCHOOL-BASED ASSESSMENT		2 (70%)	
MATHEMATICS	3 (70%)	3 (70%)	
LIBERAL STUDIES	3 (70%)	3 (70%)	
GEOGRAPHY	3 (70%)	3 (70%)	
INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECH	4 (65%)	4 (65%)	

**Certificate issued by the Hong Kong Computer Institute**

This is to certify that  
**LAM FUNG RAYMOND**  
has passed the Microsoft Word, Excel and PowerPoint Test  
and attained the result of  
**Excellence**

**Johnny Chan** 30 June 2012  
Head of Hong Kong Computer Institute

**Raymond Lam's Testimonial**

**Yuen Long Catholic Secondary School**  
Shei Pin Wai Estate, 201 Castle Peak Road, Yuen Long, N.T.  
Telephone: 2443 1363 Fax: 2443 9772

**TESTIMONIAL**

Name: **LAM FUNG RAYMOND**  
Registration Number: **200601952**  
Admission Date and Level: **01/09/2006, Secondary One**  
Graduation Date and Level: **31/07/2012, Secondary 5A**

**LEARNING PERFORMANCE**

	Excellent	Good	Average	Below Average
Analytical Ability			X	
Co-operation	X			
Diligence		X		
Independent Thinking			X	
Leadership	X			

**EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES HELD**

1. Vice-chairman of Student Union (2010-2011)
2. House Captain of Singing House (2010-2011)
3. Member of English Debate Team (2009-2011)
4. Member of Mixed Voice Choir (2007-2010)
5. Monitor (2006-2008) \*\*\*

**AWARDS AND ACHIEVEMENTS**

1. Best Teacher Award (2010-2011)
2. Best Debater in the Yuen Long Joint-school English Debate Competition 2010
3. Best Actor in the Hong Kong Science Drama Festival 2009
4. Champion of Joint-School Singing Contest 2008 and 2007 \*\*\*

**SCHOOL CHOP** **SCHOOL PRINCIPAL** **DATE**  
31 August 2012



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selecting materials related to students' everyday life and students' future career to cater for individual needs</li> <li>• Designing activities and tasks to meet the needs of students with different learning styles</li> <li>• Linking the knowledge and skills covered in the Elective Part to the Compulsory Part</li> <li>• Learning through activities</li> <li>• Allowing learner autonomy that could cater for their needs and interests</li> </ul>	<p><b>Part III Project</b> (to be implemented in May – September 2011)</p> <p>Part A: Setting up a company</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☛ company name      ☛ company logo      ☛ motto</li> <li>☛ information (telephone number, fax, address, email, website...)</li> </ul> <p>Part B: Designing a product and packaging</p> <p>Part C: Preparing promotional materials</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☛ poster      ☛ leaflet</li> <li>☛ TV commercial (product: storyboard <u>OR</u> video clip of TV commercial)</li> </ul> <p>Part D: Making sales presentation</p> <p>Each company introduces their company and sells their products. Students will then “buy” one product. The company which sells the largest amount of goods is the winner.</p> <p>Part E: Handling a complaint from customers</p> <p>The product each group “bought” from another company got some problems. Students have to write a letter of complaint to the company. The companies have to respond to the complaints.</p> <p>★Teacher provides all students in the class with the same task or exercise but varies the output or the amount and form of support that he/she gives.</p>
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## Facilitating factors and impact

1. The school used the English Enhancement Grant (EEG) to release the two members of NSS team to design the school-based curriculum and materials for Elective Parts and try out different strategies to cater for learner diversity.
2. Even weaker students loved the elective modules. They were engaged in the lessons. Some of them were more willing to read, write and to speak. They found reading longer texts and writing more manageable and became less reluctant to read and write. This encouraged the teachers to adopt different strategies to cater for learner diversity.
3. Teachers rounded up each elective with HKDSE writing questions. They demonstrated how to use the things learned in the Elective Part to tackle different types of HKDSE Paper 2 questions. The Elective Part and the Compulsory Part were aligned.

## Difficulties and suggestions

Teachers of both schools spent a lot of time on planning the new curriculum. As suggested by Curriculum Development Council (2007), schools should leave a clear record of how the English Language curriculum has been adapted in a particular year. The record must be passed on to the teachers in the following years so that they know the needs of the students, and continuity in the school curriculum can be achieved.



## Conclusion

Successful teaching requires two elements: students' understanding and engagement (Tomlinson, 1999). The two school cases demonstrated using high level of classroom interaction to engage students in active learning and providing opportunities for students to think about, apply and demonstrate what they have learned to deepen their understanding of the knowledge and skills. It is advisable for teachers at both schools to document all the changes made in adapting the school-based curriculum in a systematic manner to sustain the impact on learning and teaching in the future.

## References

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.

Tomlinson, C. A. (1999). Mapping a Route Toward Differentiated Instruction. Education Leadership, 57(1), 12-16.

**STFA Seaward Woo College**  
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**Maria CHAN (Language Support Officer)**