


Supporting teacher development

Overview

Over the last 10 years the Hong Kong education system has undergone substantial changes with a view to ensuring that it remains fit for purpose, addresses the long-term development needs of the city and provides all students with a sound foundation for life-long learning. Teachers in our schools are a pivotal part of these reform efforts. Planning and successfully implementing the kind of holistic language curriculum described in the cases in the first English Language section of this compendium requires both a reflective teaching force with sophisticated professional knowledge and skills, and a critical mass of curriculum leaders who are able to create the conditions at school level for the step changes envisaged by the curriculum reform to ultimately take root and flourish.

The articles in this section explain the different strategies used by different schools in their attempts to address the concerns listed below:

Teacher development	Goal	Strategy used
	<p>How can teachers:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. develop the leadership skills required to plan, implement and evaluate school-based curricula that address the needs of their students and are aligned with the spirit of the central curriculum? 2. mobilise their colleagues to continually reflect on the effectiveness of their practices? 3. develop the sound pedagogical and subject knowledge required to deliver their school-based curricula in ways that reflect a sound understanding of how their students learn and promote achievement for all? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Joining professional learning communities ✓ Developing teachers' professionalism through critically reviewing existing practices and data to inform planning ✓ Looking at student work to develop a better understanding of student learning and inform teaching

Joining professional learning communities

As the saying goes, a problem shared is a problem halved. Apart from time spent attending occasional professional development activities, teachers and panel heads tend to spend most of their time, and understandably so, in their own classrooms. However, networking with other schools to a) share common issues of concern related to teaching and learning, and b) discuss the different strategies used by different schools to address those issues, gives teachers a valuable opportunity to look at problems from novel perspectives. When the professional learning community is well managed and focused on enhancing the quality of the work of its members, it also provides curriculum leaders and teachers with a platform for the

development of richer insights into problems that may at first appear to, but not actually be, intractable and/or unique to particular contexts. Cases 5.21 and 5.23 both illustrate how learning communities were used as platforms to support teacher development. In the first case, the training and inter-school visits organised by the community provided English teachers and curriculum leaders with opportunities to enhance their pedagogical knowledge and curriculum leadership skills. The second case shows how an inter-school buddy reading programme brought the teachers from all five Cheung Chau primary and secondary schools together to focus on ways of improving their students' reading skills.

Developing teachers' professionalism through critically reviewing existing practices and data to inform planning

In most Hong Kong schools there is no shortage of after-school remedial or enhancement classes and programmes. These are done with the best intentions in mind and usually aim at providing particular groups of students with opportunities to plug learning gaps or further improve their performance. However, it is not uncommon to hear teachers say that the results fall short of expectations. Case 5.20 explains how making more effective use of data helped teachers improve their subject planning process. A plan setting out concrete and workable actions that were aligned with the school's major concerns provided teachers with the opportunity to learn how to cater for learner diversity within the context of literacy teaching. Case 5.22 shows how a group of teachers decided to take a critical look at students' performance in the HKDSE and the activities offered by the English Society with a view to identifying learning improvement goals. During the Evaluation-Planning-Implementation-Evaluation cycle, formal and informal curriculum leaders worked together as a team to lead subject level innovations, which addressed those goals. The use of a team approach in managing department level tasks not only broadened the perspective of the teachers concerned, but also increased the impact of their efforts on student learning.

Looking at student work to develop a better understanding of student learning and inform teaching and learning

When looking at work produced by students as part of the regular teaching and learning process, teachers need to be inquisitive and look for more than simple confirmation that students have learned or not, as the case may be, what was taught in class. Looking at student work collaboratively and in depth as part of the panel routine can be a useful platform for a) engaging in reflective dialogue about not just the work produced, but about the nature of teaching and learning; b) negotiating expected attainment standards (by using, for example, the Basic Competencies or the Learning Progression Framework), and c) strengthening the link between students' needs, the planned curriculum and classroom practices.

Deriving useful implications from this analysis of student work depends to a large extent on whether there is a shared understanding of what teachers are looking for, why they are looking, how they will look, and whether the teachers looking have solid pedagogical and subject knowledge to interpret what they find. Case 5.19 exemplifies how a group of teachers and curriculum leaders critically reviewed student learning data to effect changes to their independent learning programme. This helped them improve both their understanding of independent learning and of how to implement it more effectively.

The cases presented here reveal snapshots of how teachers and curriculum leaders in a variety of contexts have made use of different entry points (e.g. using student learning data, writing subject development plans, adding professional learning value to planning language enrichment programmes) to improve their curriculum leadership skills as well as their pedagogical and subject knowledge. A common thread running through all the cases is that teacher development is premised on and cannot be dissociated from a reflective, inquiring stance towards our work with our students.

Developing curriculum leadership through the promotion of independent learning

Background

English teachers at King's College Old Boys' Association Primary School (KCOBAPS) believe that strong curriculum leadership skills play a pivotal role in designing school-based curricula that lead to effective learning and teaching. Through their participation in the Language Learning Support Section's Curriculum Leadership Development Programme, they had the opportunity to re-examine some of the tasks they had to carry out as a matter of routine in their English panel. They sought to identify how these could be completed in ways that could optimise student learning while at the same time offering opportunities for professional learning and the development of curriculum leadership capabilities.

This article describes how the English curriculum leaders at the school enhanced their leadership capabilities by critically reviewing the implementation of their independent learning programme at P1-6 and working out measures to enhance its effectiveness.

Levels

P1-6

Strategies used

The following table outlines the strategies used by the curriculum leaders and the expected outcomes in terms of the development of their leadership capabilities:

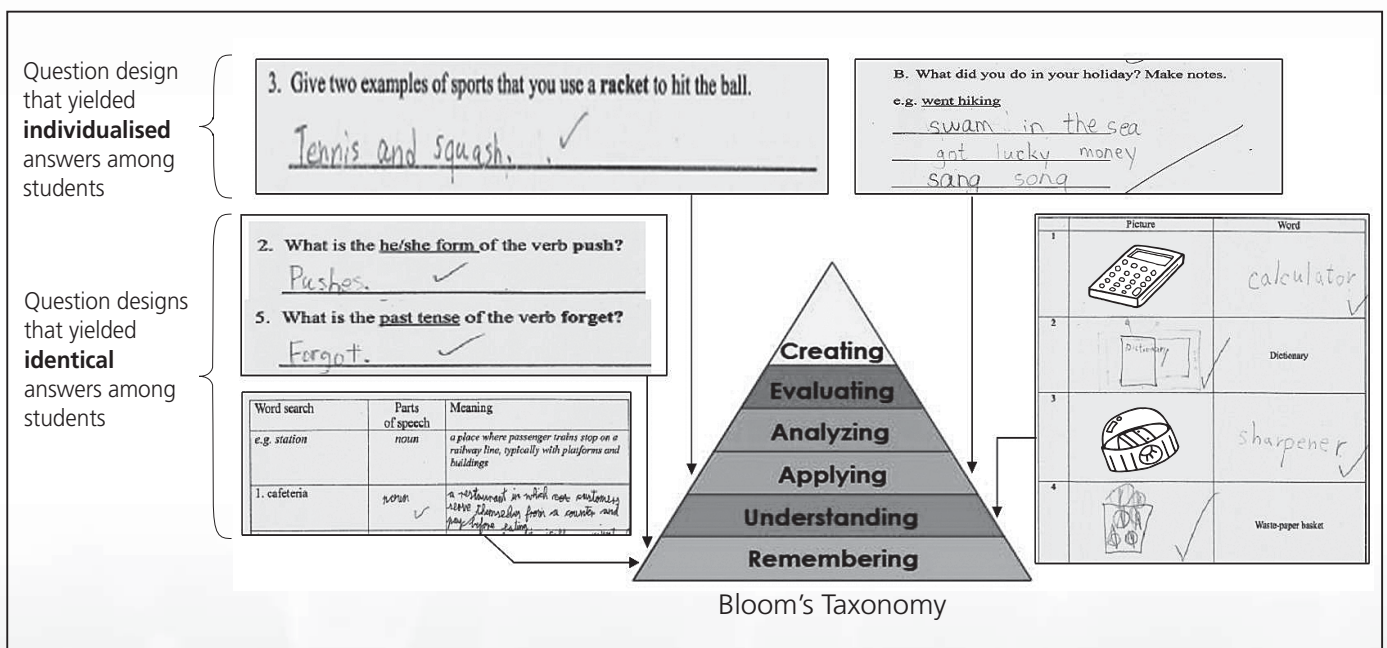
Stage	Strategy	Expected outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of areas for improvement in current practice related to the focus of concern (i.e. the implementation of independent learning) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using a protocol for Looking At Student Work (LASW) 	Enhanced curriculum leadership capabilities, e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ability to use data effectively • ability to propose concrete and workable actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addressing the findings of the LASW process in order to enhance the effectiveness of the independent learning programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducting SMART action planning (setting improvement objectives that are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pedagogical and subject knowledge • monitoring and evaluation mechanisms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of opportunities for curriculum leaders to consolidate their knowledge of how to promote independent learning in ways that optimise student learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducting internal and external professional sharing sessions • Studying professional articles and relevant literature related to the promotion of independent learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • communication with different parties

What happened

Stage (1) Identification of areas for improvement in current practice related to the focus of concern, i.e. the implementation of independent learning

The effectiveness of teaching and learning is commonly monitored by, for example, looking at raw assessment data (e.g. the percentage of students who passed a test or examination) and conducting lesson observations. However, these two sources of data have limitations that are worth pointing out. For example, test or examination results give teachers an overview of how many students passed or failed, but they do not provide any information about the process that led to those results. Similarly, classroom observations can provide the observer with a general impression of the overall class performance, but they may not necessarily yield detailed information about the performance of specific groups or the performance of the class in specific tasks, or whether the performance in a single lesson is a reflection of the students' actual ability.

In view of these considerations, the curriculum leaders decided to use a protocol to look at student work and gauge the extent to which the design of the tasks given was affecting student performance. A representative sample of student work was collected and analysed to identify patterns of performance and areas for improvement.



Sample of analysis of student work

The analysis enabled the teachers to reach the following conclusions :

1. More opportunities should be provided for students to demonstrate **how they can apply** their dictionary skills to **support their learning in new contexts**.
2. The independent learning programme should include **an element of personalisation** as tasks that yield identical answers from all students may not provide the basis for deep thinking or learning.
3. There should be **taxonomical progression** in the questions set, i.e. questions should place progressively higher levels of cognitive demand in order to provide an appropriate level of challenge.



LASW in progress

Through looking at students' work, teachers also built a shared understanding of what they meant by "independent learning". The consensus reached helped set the standards and expected outcomes, as well as guide the process of designing the dictionary skills teaching materials.

Stage (2) Addressing the findings of the LASW process in order to enhance the effectiveness of the independent learning programme

The findings from the previous stage were used to inform action planning. The English panel head thus drafted an action plan that spelled out clearly the expected outcomes, specific supporting measures, measurable success criteria and a variety of evaluation methods. Below is an extract from the plan:


<p>Objective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To help students become more independent learners
<p>Expected outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students will become more <i>motivated learners</i>. Students will be <i>equipped with different learning strategies</i> so that they can be active problem-solvers. Students will be able to <i>apply different learning strategies in new situations confidently</i>. Students will learn to <i>set their own learning goals</i> based on an understanding of their strengths and weaknesses. There will be <i>more diversified assignments</i> for students.


Expected outcomes :

Students will be *equipped with different learning strategies* so that they can be active problem-solvers. AND
 Students will be able to *apply different learning strategies in new contexts*.

Measure / Strategy	Success criteria	Evaluation method
(1) Promotion of <i>dictionary skills</i> to help students solve problems in reading and writing (P.2, 5, 6). (Remark : the specific dictionary skills for different levels are given in Appendix 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students at different levels are able to <i>apply dictionary skills</i> learned to help them solve problems in reading and writing. Students will be able to <i>recount</i> the learning strategies that they used to solve problems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Student work</i>, i.e. student dictionary skills worksheets that <i>demonstrate students' application of dictionary skills</i> in handling learning difficulties. <i>Student interview</i>

 gives specific details

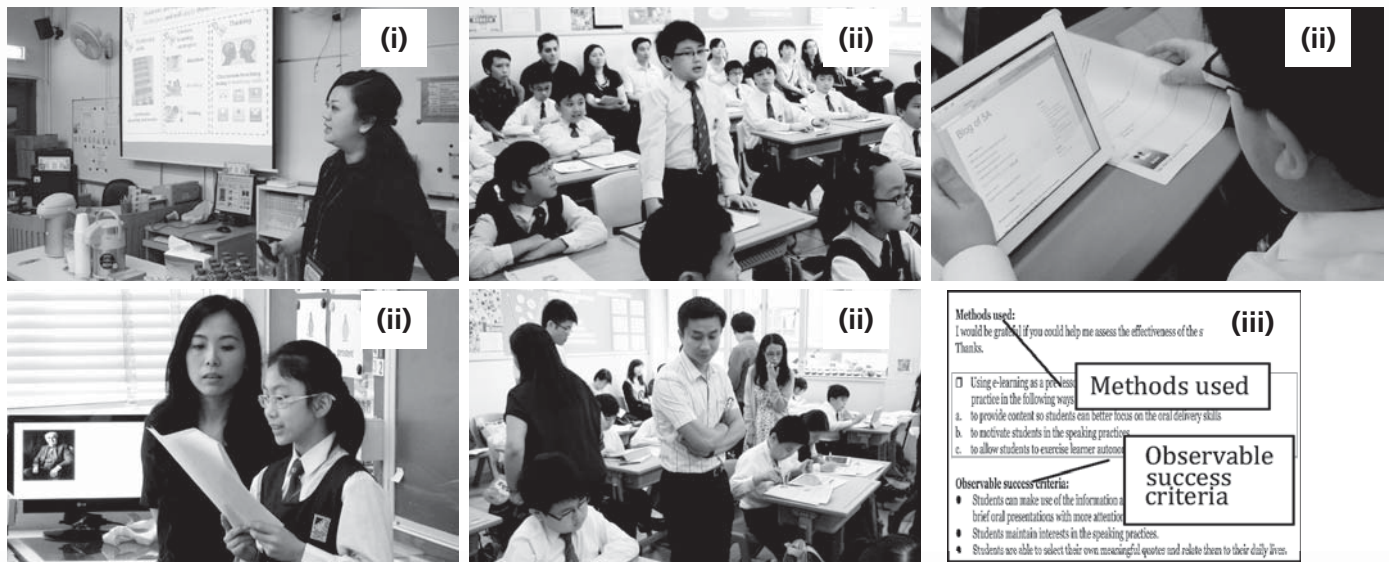
 specifies quality of work expected instead of focusing on mere quantity

 collects specific data (student learning data) for evaluation in addition to perception data (student interview)

Stage (3) Conducting internal and external professional sharing

Through participating in the following events, the curriculum leaders had an opportunity to conceptualise and share their experience of promoting independent learning:

1 – Hosting an inter-school lesson observation (LO)		
Audience	Objective and focus	Content
Primary English teachers from member schools of the Curriculum Leadership Development Network and Kwun Tong Learning Circle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To foster exchange of views on independent learning and how it can best be implemented Lesson observation focus: How e-learning is used as a pre-lesson preparation tool to support the development of students' speaking skills 	<p>The event was divided into the following parts :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Pre-lesson observation briefing on school context, background and lesson flow; (ii) Lesson observation; (iii) Post-lesson observation discussion to review and reflect on the lesson observed



2 – Presenting the subject-based experience on the in-house staff development day		
Audience	Objective and focus	Content
Fellow colleagues from different subject panels in the school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To prepare for the promotion of independent learning using a whole-school approach starting from 2013-14 To share the English panel's pilot project with other subject panels 	<p>The curriculum leaders took turns to share the initiative(s) they piloted at different levels, which included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Empowering students with different strategies to do self-revision for dictation; (ii) Teaching of dictionary skills; (iii) Motivating and supporting students to learn through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) doing pre-lesson preparation (b) e-learning (c) forming an online learning community



Impact

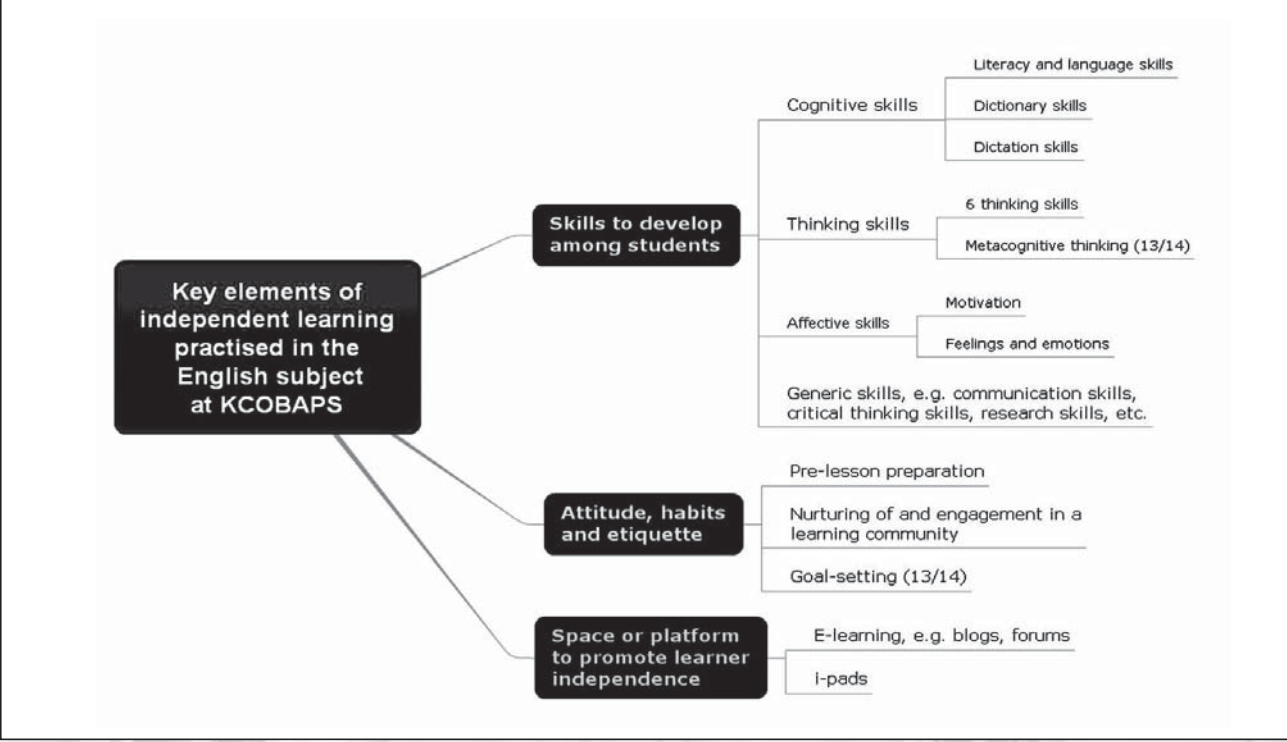
1. Good progress in the development of **different curriculum leadership capabilities** was observed among the curriculum leaders:

(i) More effective use of data

Apart from **gaining confidence in using more varied sources of data** to inform their teaching, the curriculum leaders became **more familiar with how to make use of the student learning evidence collected to lead more focused panel discussions and effect changes**. One of the successful examples was the inclusion of learning intentions written in student-friendly language in all writing task sheets to help students develop the habit of working according to objectives and so become more self-directed in their learning. The change was introduced after teachers looked at their own feedback to students' writing and realised the importance of good alignment between their written feedback and the learning objectives of the tasks.

(ii) Enhanced subject and pedagogical knowledge

The process and findings of the LASW exercise provided teachers with a wealth of information related to how their students learned and how they could optimise that learning. Regular review of their work led to enhanced subject and pedagogical knowledge, so teachers were able to **outline the key elements** of independent learning that were practised in their subject and **share** them with their fellow colleagues. When doing the project, the core teachers researched different models of independent learning and did ample professional readings. Below is their revised model:



(iii) Improved planning with concrete and workable solutions and clear evaluation mechanism proposed

As shown in the plan extract in the previous section, teachers performed the administrative plan-writing task professionally by making better alignment between the expected outcomes, the measures to take, relevant success criteria and evaluation methods.

(iv) More effective communication with other parties

The curriculum leaders had to maintain **open communication** with **teachers in the English panel, the school management, students and parents** through various channels, such as e-mails, meetings, written records, etc. Tasks like hosting or participating in inter-school lesson observations **fostered professional dialogue and exchanges with teachers from other schools. Sharing their experience enabled panel heads to benefit from alternative views and feedback, as well as see their work and enquiry recognised.**



2. Improvement in students' independent learning skills

- (i) Students were equipped with **different learning strategies**, e.g. dictionary strategies and dictation revision strategies **to learn more independently.**

Example 1 – Dictionary strategies

You have four methods to find out the meaning of the words below:

1. from on-line dictionary
2. from dictionary book
3. if you know the meaning of the word, write in your own words or draw pictures to describe it
4. others, such as Internet, Reader etc.

Tick (✓) the method you use.

gather	crystals	collide
✓	✓	✓
1.0 2.0 3.0 4.0	1.0 2.0 3.0 4.0	1.0 2.0 3.0 4.0

Dictionary strategies learned before

Evidence of learning

Free choice of strategy to learn

P6 dictionary skills worksheet

Example 2 – Dictation revision strategies

Goal set for dictation

Strategies selected

Strategies selected

My Goal (Feb – Mar)

Dict 2

Goal	Strategy
<input type="checkbox"/> Make good efforts	<input type="checkbox"/> 1. Word wall
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2. Copy words a day
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3. Trace, copy & recall
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4. Regular practice, e.g. <u>two</u> times per <u>day</u>
	<input type="checkbox"/> 5. Others (<u>read more</u>)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Make fewer careless mistakes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 6. Check work before handing it in
	<input type="checkbox"/> 7. Read the words once before handing it in
	<input type="checkbox"/> 8. Others ()

1. Check your progress, e.g.			
Strategy	Date	Progress	Parents' signature
3	Feb 11 to 28	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Did not try <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tried but not completed <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Completed	
3	Mar 1 to 31	<input type="checkbox"/> Did not try <input type="checkbox"/> Tried but not completed <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Completed	

2. Result
I can use Trace, copy and recall to improve my spelling. I have careless mistakes.

P2 dictation goal and strategy sheet

(ii) **Supportive learning communities** were formed. Extracts taken from the class learning blog are shown below:

Showing appreciation for others' contribution :
I really like the quotes you put here for us.



Showing support for peers' learning :
You can type two headed snake in YouTube. You can find more videos in YouTube. Hope you (can) find more videos...

 5akcobaps  14 May 2013 08:49
Thank you Malisa, I really like the quotes you put here for us, let me understand more on Messi.
By Kai Chong

 5akcobaps  7 May 2013 07:40
I find these videos in YouTube.You can type two headed snake in YouTube. You can find more videos in YouTube.Hope you find more videos in YouTube.
by Elizabeth Hung



(iii) Students took ownership of their learning. Extracts taken from the class learning blog are shown below:

Example 1

 5akcobaps  10 May 2013 18:12
Please write the blog quickly.
Reply

This was a friendly reminder from a group member when his teammate had not posted on the blog according to the agreed schedule. This showed they monitored their own work.

Example 2

 5akcobaps  12 May 2013 02:25
1.Benjamin,where is the video of Bruce Lee?
2.Ambrose,I can't find your part.
Reply

This message showed that the students monitored each others' work in the class blog.

Facilitating factors

1. The **selection of an entry point that aligns well with the school concerns** helped enlist **strong school management support**.
2. **Teachers' willingness to model the type of behaviour expected of life-long learners** through keeping abreast with latest technology, doing professional readings, conducting professional exchanges with members of learning communities, etc. is considered a key facilitating factor in this project.



Way forward

1. Panel and school development

Under the core teachers' leadership, the first steps were taken to develop more mature independent learning skills among students as quoted in the section on **impact**.

However, independent learning is a big topic. In the years to come, concerted efforts in the panel are needed to:

- (i) familiarise students with how to engage in reflection and metacognition
- (ii) teach students how to set SMART goals

The panel will also further share their experiences with other subject departments.

2. Home-school cooperation

In order to sustain the progress made and ensure that best practice regarding independent learning is fully embedded in the school-based curriculum, the curriculum leaders will continue to work on enlisting support from parents and will further strengthen home-school cooperation.

References

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Developing curriculum leadership skills through preparing and implementing the subject development plan

Background

It has been an established practice for panel heads to prepare a subject development plan before the commencement of a new academic year. However, it is not uncommon to see that some panel heads consider the writing process as requiring painstaking attention to detail while the finished plan tends to receive little or no attention from the panel members. Although submission of yearly subject development plans is a requirement in all schools, teachers may not see the purpose and importance of a subject plan. This can lead to plans being perceived as a mere administrative task with little or no impact on practice. A critical look at the problem may reveal that in some cases, this is caused by lack of knowledge of how to make effective use of the plan to set development priorities, and establish how measures should be implemented and evaluated. This article explains how the panel heads at King's College Old Boys' Association Primary School No.2 made use of the knowledge and skills acquired through participation in the Curriculum Leadership Network (CLN) workshop on this topic to establish effective links between the writing up of the subject plan and the actual development of the subject.

Target Group

Panel heads

What happened

Theme-based workshop

Before joining the CLN in the 2010-2011 school year, the school's English panel heads used to take a general and perhaps overly ambitious approach to writing the subject development plans. That means that the plan tended to reflect their desire to develop a substantial number of areas, but was less clear about objectives, implementation and evaluation details. Also, the number of development areas chosen made it difficult to set priorities and create the conditions to use the plan as the basis for improvements in learning and teaching. However, after attending a CLN workshop that addressed these common concerns in the summer of 2010, those panel heads began to take a more inquisitive stance towards the task of writing the plan. The table below summarises their concerns and reflections about their established subject planning process after the workshop:

Departmental practice in preparing and implementing the subject development plan	Panel heads' concerns and reflections about the subject planning process
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Put down details of all major targets/ programmes, the well-established and the new, resulting in a thick plan with over 20 pages Tried to work out new initiatives to add for the year that could be accomplished with all year groups in a year, respond to the school development concerns, as well as matching teachers' readiness 	<p>How to identify the developmental needs of the panel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to select suitable focuses for development How to further develop well-established and effective practices
	<p>How to do proper action planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to make the actions proposed in the plan specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound and ensure that all panel members understand their role and what is expected of them

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set broad objectives for the development focuses • Proposed development measures and timeline which were general and too vague • Planned stand-alone measures to address the school and subject development concerns • Relied only on collecting documents e.g. lesson planning or observation records and students' perception data to evaluate the objectives set • Specified the evidence to be collected only but not the expected outcomes and how the evidence would be used to draw conclusions • Always assigned panel heads as the people in charge of carrying out measures planned for different development focuses • Mentioned the plan in the first panel meeting, then placed it in the school network for members to access, but did not refer to it in the subsequent panel meetings 	<p>How to conduct effective evaluation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to select evaluation methods that are relevant to the measures proposed and can yield useful data to gauge the effectiveness of those measures • How to define success criteria <p>How to manage resources strategically and communicate with the panel members more effectively</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to mobilise panel members to buy into and contribute towards the implementation of the plan
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School-based support

After experiencing the key planning and thinking process in the subject planning workshop, the panel heads thoroughly discussed with the support officer how to connect their learning from the workshop with their school subject plan writing task for 2010-11. The table below shows snapshots of the major actions they took in creating the conditions that could both give the plan writing process a greater focus, and support its effective implementation. Through the completion of this task (i.e. reconceptualising how the subject plan is written), the panel heads hoped to develop the following curriculum leadership capabilities:

- **use data effectively to set development focuses**
- **use resources effectively and strategically to facilitate the implementation of the plan**
- **propose concrete and workable actions to inform how the development focus can be implemented**
- **establish monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure effective implementation of the plan**
- **communicate effectively with different parties to enlist support and foster ownership**

Action (1):	Identifying the developmental needs of the English panel
Curriculum leadership capabilities to be developed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use data effectively to set development focuses

(i) Using external and internal data to identify what earlier work to build on and examine if there exists any urgent developmental gap to fill

- The panel heads reviewed the direction of the panel by listing the major focuses/measures in the previous subject plans.

2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Process writing (P6) Theme-based word lists (P1-J6) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Process writing (P5) Learner diversity (P1-P6) Theme-based word lists (P1-P6) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Process writing (P4) Speaking skills (P1) Learner diversity (P1-P6) Higher order thinking (P1-P6) Vocab learning skills (P1-P6) Self-study skills (P1-P6)

Excerpts of meeting notes (summer 2010): Panel heads' discussions on subject planning

- They then analysed the recent data e.g. TSA results, ESR reports, colleagues' observations from classroom learning and student work, to identify what was working and what could be further developed, as well as to explore the reasons why some measures had not been effective or had not led to enhanced teaching and learning.

(ii) Using the analysis to inform the setting of development focuses

After reflecting upon the review findings, the panel heads made these decisions:

- since the use of process writing as a strategy to develop students' writing had become an established and effective classroom practice across levels, it no longer needed to be set as a development focus
- they would continue the development of speaking skills in P1 and extend this focus to P2 and P3
- they would keep and improve the implementation of last year's development focuses: vocabulary, catering for learner diversity, higher-order thinking, self-study skills
- they would pilot reading skills development in P4

This thinking and planning process is manifested in the following meeting notes excerpted from the discussions in the summer of 2010:

Development of Process Writing in P4		Development of Speaking in P1	
Data	Evaluation & Analysis	Data	Evaluation & Analysis
<p><i>Ts' feedback (esp. 2009-10 Year-end Review Meeting)</i></p> <p>By looking at students' compositions, teachers noticed that:</p> <p>P4 Ss: -see the importance of planning the organisation of the writing -use peer-editing checklists to help them identify some basic mistakes e.g. tenses, spelling -are motivated to find extra information from the internet for their writing</p> <p>P6 Ss: -are able to write with some elaboration</p>	<p>Process Writing has enabled students to improve the following writing skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -elaborating and organisation of ideas -awareness of the need and ability to self-correct <p>↓ Why?</p> <p>Since 2007: •A no. of writing packages have been developed for use at KS1-2 & many of them have been refined after the try-outs in the past few years</p> <p>↓ What can be done in 2010-11?</p> <p>Process writing will be infused into the school-based curriculum and used as the main/most important strategy to develop students' writing skills → Should be moved from the Subject Plan as a development focus, to the Department Handbook as a guideline</p>	<p><i>Ts' feedback (esp. 2009-10 Year-end Review Meeting)</i></p> <p>From classroom observation, P1 Ss are willing to speak in complete sentences & show improvements in phonics skills</p> <p><i>Assessment results</i> Improvements in students' speaking performance, especially in 2009 TSA KS1 Speaking Paper - Presentation</p>	<p>Ss are making significant improvements in the speaking performance</p> <p>↓ Why?</p> <p>In 2009-10, starting with P1: •explicit teaching of speaking skills e.g. phonics + using a wider variety of speaking activities to create opportunities for Ss to speak in P1 classroom •alignment of the internal assessment speaking exam format with the TSA format</p> <p>↓ What can be done in 2010-11?</p> <p>Build on the speaking skills identified in P1 (09-10) to develop a vertical speaking curriculum in KS1 that shows vertical coherence & progression</p> <p>Continue in P2 & P3 the teaching & the assessment practices found effective in P1 (i.e. infusing speaking skills into the curriculum + using a wider variety of speaking activities e.g. reading aloud, express personal experiences & picture description)</p>

Action (2):	Planning for the implementation and evaluation of the new development focuses
Curriculum leadership capabilities to be developed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use resources effectively and strategically to facilitate the implementation of the plan • Propose concrete and workable actions to inform how the development focus can be implemented • Establish monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure effective implementation of the plan

(i) Setting priority to identify objectives of the new development focus

(a) Before identifying the improvement targets or objectives of the new development focus – reading, the panel heads had factored several considerations into their planning as they set priorities. Here is a summary of that decision-making process:

Planning issue 1 – “Should we initiate a full-scale development of reading in the first year of implementation, given the curriculum space and resources?”

Action

- The panel heads took stock of the focuses they thought needed further development as well as the resources that would be available for each year group.

Year Group	Development focus (to continue in 2010-11)					Resources to be available (2010-11)
	Speaking	Vocab	LD	HOT	Self-study skills	
P1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-Join the NET Section's PLPRW Programme: Ts will receive regular training & support in the teaching of reading & writing -Small class teaching
P2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-Small class teaching
P3	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-Small class teaching
P4		✓	✓	✓	✓	-Join the LLSS's CLN Programme: Ts will be offered support in leadership development plus curriculum development -Remedial classes for the less able Ss (*a particularly weak cohort) -Specialised teaching (with 1 free period per week)
P5		✓	✓	✓	✓	-Remedial classes for the less able Ss
P6		✓	✓	✓	✓	

Findings

- Several other focuses would be implemented at this time and teachers might be overloaded if the new focus were piloted in all year groups.

Stocktaking development focuses

Decision on the development objectives

- They would target particular year group(s) specifically in order to create space for implementation and capacity building.

Planning issue 2 – “Which year group(s) to target at?”

Action

Further analysis of the stocktaking findings based upon the consideration of these factors:

- students’ needs
- teachers’ development of professional skills in the teaching of reading
- space for teachers to achieve the goal
- the school resources available
- opportunities for integrating the subject development focus (reading) with the school development focus - catering for learner diversity
- progression in curriculum planning

Findings

- Based on the internal assessment results, P4 students had a more pressing need to develop reading skills.

- The expertise from EDB in P1 and P4 could be tapped to support teachers' professional development in reading.
- The free period provision in P4 could be drawn on to create space for teachers to achieve the goal.
- The school resources for remedial class and small class teaching could be exploited to create supportive conditions for catering for learner diversity in the classroom.
- P4 and P1 could be good starting points for building progression into key stage curriculum planning.

Decision on the development objectives

- The panel heads placed priority on two particular year groups - P1 and P4.

(b) After weighing the needs and readiness at different levels: curriculum, teachers, students as well as resources, the panel heads specified the main objective for the focus: To enhance students' reading abilities in P1 and P4 through improving the reading curriculum and teaching of reading.

(ii) Do effective action planning to guide the implementation and evaluation process

- To inform colleagues how to achieve the objectives set, the panel heads mapped out what specific actions should be taken to implement and evaluate each development focus.

The following excerpts of the subject plan focusing on reading explains the strategies used in the planning process in more detail.

- Align measures with objectives
- List concrete measures specifying the strategies identified from the needs analysis

- Set realistic schedule with a specific timeline to space out implementation

- Spell out roles and duties clearly
- Delegate duties to members with training, external support and space

Focus 6: To enhance students' reading ability in P1 and P4

Objectives	Strategy/Task	Success Criteria	Evaluation method and indicators	Schedule	Teachers in charge	Resource
Improve the reading curriculum	-Develop a school-based reading curriculum and resources for use by all English teachers through: •the P4 reading programme (incorporating a variety of text types & teaching of phonics, sight words, reading skills) •the P1 PLPRW programme (covering the teaching of phonics, sight words, reading skills & integration of reading as input for writing)	-Reading curriculum enriched with reading materials (4 reading packages in P4 & 7 units of work in P1) of different text types with a clear indication of the target sound, sight words & reading skills	-Discussion in the CLP to review the curriculum -Teaching resources developed for the target readers (plans + materials highlighting the target text types, sounds, sight words & reading skills)	1st Term -2 readers for P4; -4 units of work for P1	-English Panel Head -PLPRW coordinator	-Specialised teaching (with 1 free period per week) -All P1 & P4 teachers
Improve the teaching of reading	(covering the teaching of phonics, sight words, reading skills & integration of reading as input for writing)	A wider repertoire of teaching strategies in the design of reading activities & conducting of the reading lessons	-Reading packages -Videotaped lessons on the tryout of particular teaching strategies	2nd Term -2 readers for P4; -3 units of work for P1	-All P1, P4 teachers	-Support from EDB (NET Section for P1; LLSS for P4)
Improve the students' reading ability	-Use of co-planning sessions, PD training & lesson observation activities for professional development in the teaching of reading	-Students are able to understand & respond to reading materials of different text types, & apply the target reading skills in the reading activities/tasks (P4, P1) -Students are able to master the mechanics of writing (P1)	-Quality of responses in the worksheets (target skills) -Observation of students' engagement, understanding of the reading materials & the quality of responses in the activities -Assessment on target skills			-Small Class Teaching (P1) -Remedial class (P4)

- Define expected targets in measurable and observable outcomes
- Select appropriate evidence and a suitable method of analysis to evaluate the objectives set
- Ensure a balanced use of qualitative and quantitative data

Action (3):	Creating supportive conditions for the realisation of the plan
Curriculum leadership capabilities to be developed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use resources effectively and strategically to facilitate the implementation of the plan Communicate effectively with different parties to enlist support and foster ownership

(i) Communicating the plan clearly to panel members to ensure a shared understanding of its essence

In the first panel meeting, the panel heads:

- described the present direction set out in the plan (i.e. focuses of the year) and made projections of possible future development based on the plan

Excerpts of the plan and road map used in the first panel meeting

K.C.O.B.A. Primary School No 2		2010-2011 Programme Plan for English	
Focuses to continue			
Focuses of the year			
1. (To continue this focus in J.1 and promote to J.2 and J.3)	To strengthen students' speaking skills		
2. (To continue and improve the implementation of this focus in J.2-J.6)	To promote vocabulary teaching and learning		
3. (To continue and improve the implementation of this focus in J.1-J.6)	To cater for learner diversity in English learning and teaching		
4. (To continue and improve the implementation of this focus in J.1-J.6)	To develop students' high order thinking skills		
5. (To continue and improve the implementation of this focus in J.1-J.6)	To develop students' self study skills		
6. (To pilot this focus in J.1 and J.6)	To enhance students' reading ability		
New focus to develop			

	2010-11 Focus of Development					
	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6
Reading skills development	pilot	[promote in 2011-12]	[promote in 2012-13]	pilot	[promote in 2011-12]	[promote in 2011-12]
Speaking skills development	continue with improvements	promote	promote	[promote in 2011-12]	[promote in 2012-13]	[promote in 2012-13]
Vocabulary	continue with improvements	continue with improvements	continue with improvements	continue with improvements	continue with improvements	continue with improvements
LD	continue with improvements	continue with improvements	continue with improvements	continue with improvements	continue with improvements	continue with improvements
HOT	continue with improvements	continue with improvements	continue with improvements	continue with improvements	continue with improvements	continue with improvements
Self-study skills	continue with improvements	continue with improvements	continue with improvements	continue with improvements	continue with improvements	continue with improvements

- highlighted the areas for improvement for the focuses to continue, as well as the rationale for selecting the new focus, expected outcomes and the strategies that would be used
- appealed to colleagues to read the plan for details, reinforcing the message that the plan was a guide to implementation while allowing flexibility to make changes

(ii) Delegating to the teachers-in-charge to strengthen their role in carrying out the plan

- The panel heads approached the teachers-in-charge, seeking their views and suggestions on the plan and clarifying their roles in coordinating and monitoring the plan, enabling them to feel that their input was expected and would be taken into account.
- They solicited their help in communicating the plan to the teacher team involved.

(iii) Creating opportunities for review and reflection to build a sense of community and share knowledge

In the mid-term panel meeting, the panel heads tabled the plan and reviewed its implementation progress as part of the support provided to panel members through:

- illustrating how to use the plan as the basis for monitoring and evaluation by explaining how the major evaluation findings had been drawn from the learning evidence collected

Percentage of correct responses to target items in the reading exam paper						
Question number	Number of students getting the correct answer	4A - Percentage of students in class getting the correct answer	4B - Number of students getting the correct answer	4B - Percentage of students in class getting the correct answer	4C - Number of students getting the correct answer	4C - Percentage of students in class getting the correct answer
E1	28	87.5%	17	60.7%	29	93.5%
E2	25	78.1%	11	39.3%	28	90.3%
E3	29	90.6%	17	60.7%	17	54.8%
E4	16	50%	8	28.6%	11	35.5%
Success Criteria:						
Class A (more able)		Class C (average)		Class B (remedial)		
70%		60%		50%		

Reading: Student Development	
Skills students could achieve ...	Skills students could NOT achieve ...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognize targeted sight words Guess the meaning of unfamiliar words Infer character's feelings by looking at the exclamatory words Use information in the content page 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pronoun referencing Recognise the features of a travel brochure Understand information in the Glossary

- sharing the collaboratively developed teaching resources, together with some effective instructional strategies which had been tried out by the teacher teams involved to give practical examples of how to manage the implementation of the planned measures and to show recognition of colleagues' hard work

P4 Reading CLP Planning Sheet			
Module/Unit:	Reader:		Text-type:
Chorus	1 Pg ___ - ___ ()	2 Pg ___ - ___ ()	3 Pg ___ - ___ ()
	4 Pg ___ - ___ ()	5 Pg ___ - ___ ()	6 Pg ___ - ___ ()
	7 Pg ___ - ___ ()	8 Pg ___ - ___ ()	9 Pg ___ - ___ ()
Main teaching strategies:	<input type="checkbox"/> Storytelling _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Shared reading _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Independent reading _____		<input type="checkbox"/> Reading aloud _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Supported reading _____
Reading skills focus		Relevant Substance in the Reader	
K	1. directionality	<input type="checkbox"/>	
S	2. identify and name letters	<input type="checkbox"/>	
1	3. recognize the beginning and end of sentences	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2	4. distinguish between capital and small letters	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	5. recognize familiar words in new texts#	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	6. recognize known clusters of letters in unknown words	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	7. use phonics skills to decode words#	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	8. recognize common abbreviations and contracted forms	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	9. recognize formulaic or common expressions#	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	10. identify key words for the main idea in a sentence#	<input type="checkbox"/>	
K	11. sight read common, phonically irregular words e.g. we, a, you, have, said, was	<input type="checkbox"/>	
S	12. understand functions of punctuation & by using appropriate reading & intonation #	<input type="checkbox"/>	
1	13. read aloud the texts clearly & with comprehensible pronunciation and generally appropriate pace, stress, rhythm and intonation#	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2	14. recognize recurrent patterns in language structure, such as word structure, word order, sentence structure#	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	15. work out the meaning of unknown words by using visual cues, context (e.g. use known parts of words or recognize prefixes & suffixes) & knowledge of the world	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	16. understand the connection between ideas by identifying limited cohesive devices -pronoun & connectives e.g. and, or, but, also, at last, because, first, however, if, therefore, too, first, next, finally, because, so, when#	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	17. understand the information provided on the book cover (title, author, illustrator, on the spine or sleeve), contents page, page numbers, index & glossary#	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	18. predict the content and likely development of a topic/ text by using personal experiences, context, knowledge of the world & recognizing key words#	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	19. skim a text to obtain a general impression and the gist or main ideas	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	20. scan a text to locate specific information by using strategies such as repeated words, words in bold, italics or capital letters locate in response to questions looking at headings#	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	21. recognize the format & language features of common text types e.g. journals, letters, notices, reports, simple literary/imaginary texts (understand simile, personification, rhyme, rhythm, alliteration, onomatopoeia) #	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	22. dictionary skills#	<input type="checkbox"/>	
K	23. sequence events#	<input type="checkbox"/>	
S	24. locate information in simple price lists, charts and directories	<input type="checkbox"/>	
1	25. identify main ideas#	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2	26. identify details that suggests a main idea #	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	27. recognize the presentation of idea as through headings, paragraphing, spacing, italics, bold print and punctuation	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	28. understand intention, attitudes & feelings conveyed in a text by recognizing features such as the choice & use of language	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	29. make inferences#	<input type="checkbox"/>	

A curriculum planning tool developed by the teacher teams

- discussing problems that had arisen from the implementation of the planned measures and the possible remedial strategies

TEACHERS' LEARNING	
Tried out in P.4 reading:	
Teaching Objective	Teaching Strategy
⊕ Support Ss to develop inference making skills	Explicit teaching
⊕ Help Ss guess the meaning of unknown words	- Heighten awareness of word formation -Do think-aloud
⊕ Give Ss a purpose to read to improve their concentration	Use of focus questions
⊕ Encourage Ss to respond to the reader read	Establish text-to-self connection when designing post-reading activity/task

Difficulties	Follow-ups
• Packed curriculum	Curriculum planning: Trim down coverage of some G.E. units ⇒ Leave at least 1 week for each reader
• Ss found some questions in the worksheets hard to understand	Simplify the phrasing of the questions
• Limited thematic ties between the reader and the GE program	Resequence the two readers next year
• Ss not familiar with non-fiction text	Beware of the vocabulary interference
• Design of examination questions	Make reference to TSA papers

Excerpts of the powerpoint used in the mid-term panel meeting

Impact

The following extracts were taken from the log kept by one of the panel heads to record her reflections about the effectiveness of the new approach taken to the task of writing the subject development plan. For triangulation purposes, the principal was also interviewed after the first panel meeting, and the English panel members were invited to express their views on panel and collaborative lesson planning meetings.

Panel Head's self-reflection

Principal's interview

"We've done a **more thorough analysis of our needs** by making reference to the TSA data, QA report, exam results and colleagues' comments. By doing so, we mapped out our subject development focuses... We worked out **which focuses to promote, improve and categorise as routine tasks...** "

"A **clear schedule** has been set so that colleagues know the requirements of each term... A **wider variety of evaluation methods** has been used... While implementing the plan, we learnt **how to set skill focus horizontally and vertically**, design materials developing the skills, then evaluate student learning by **linking assessment with teaching...** "

Use data effectively to set development focus

Propose concrete and workable actions, establish monitoring and evaluation mechanisms

Communicate effectively with different parties

Use resources effectively and strategically

"**The meeting is better than ever before!** Through explaining this year's focuses and presenting a road map of possible future development, the panel heads have **given members a clear picture of the department's direction**. With the focuses mapped out for each year group, **all members know how to fit into the development** while **panel heads know how to support members** in the implementation process."

"Instead of saying something vague like 'improving students' English proficiency', they expressed clearly **details of how to develop the focuses of the year concretely and specifically...** They also **asked members for feedback**, especially those who have experience in working in that focus."

As for the **panel members**, they generally felt that they **understood the panel direction set out in the subject plan** after the first panel meeting. They also responded well to the review and sharing session in the mid-term panel meeting as they learned more about how to implement the development focus through seeing the related teaching strategies in action. As for **the teacher team involved in piloting the reading focus in P4, they began to recognise the direction set out in the plan** (i.e. the need to improve the reading curriculum and teaching of reading) while they were engaged in the development process.

Facilitating factors

Relevance of the CLN Programme to the needs of the panel heads

Taking into account the school's work cycle and the curriculum leaders' needs, the CLN offered the first workshop on subject planning. The relevance of the topic to the panel heads, together with the mode of support that the CLN adopted (i.e. structured learning in the form of theme-based workshops and situated learning in the form of school-based support), facilitated application of the suggestions made in the workshop in their own school context through the task of writing the subject plan. The panel heads of this school found this mode of support most useful for the development of their leadership capabilities.

Commitment of the teacher team and the support of the school management

In order to create the conditions for a review of how the long-term development of the subject was planned, the school management gave panel heads the flexibility to refrain from adding more development focuses to the subject plan. Instead, panel heads were given the space to carry out a thorough evaluation of the present situation. This enabled them, for example, to devise differentiated success indicators for the evaluation of reading skills achievement to meet students' diverse needs while integrating the development of the subject focus with the school focus -- catering for learner diversity.



Way forward

Through preparing and implementing the subject plan as described here, the panel heads captured the essence of planning and recognised that the subject plan is not just a formality, but has a purpose. To sustain their learning within the department, the panel heads will try to strengthen the roles of the coordinators in planning, monitoring and evaluating the programmes of which they are in charge. They will also invite them to share their learning in the panel meetings.

King's College Old Boys' Association Primary School No.2
Peggy TSANG (Language Support Officer)

Capacity building and curriculum leadership development through inter-school learning communities

Background

Learning communities provide a platform for cross-fertilisation. As Feiman-Nemser (1996) puts it, “the easiest and fastest way to learn is from other people.” Understanding the potential impact of learning networks, Sau Ming Primary School decided to set up and run learning communities inside the school. To reinforce teachers’ learning and broaden their professional horizons, the school also joined different inter-school networks. So, over the last few years, the panel head, vice panel head and many English teachers have taken part in inter-school learning communities. The experience and knowledge gained have had a positive impact on the professional capacity of the English panel and the development of the curriculum leadership skills of the teachers involved in this project.

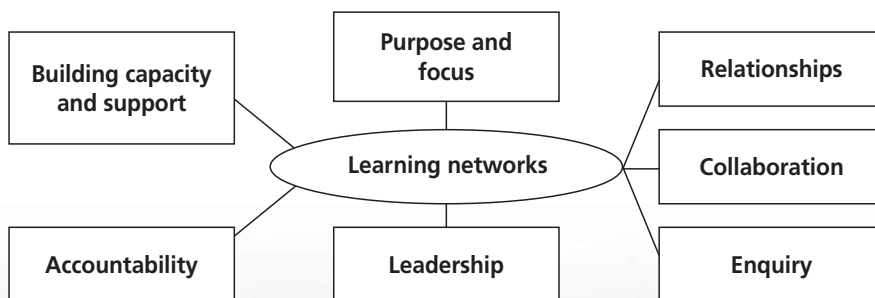
Levels

P4 – P6

Strategies used

1. Networking

In this school case, networking was used to promote teacher development. The school participated in networks organised by the Education Bureau (EDB) that displayed the features of an effective network put forward by Earl and Katz (2005):



Feature	How it worked in this school
Purpose and focus	The purposes and focuses of the networks were spelled out when the EDB networks were launched, offering opportunities for all network schools to address common concerns.
Relationships	Since the networks were for professional development, not for teacher or school assessment, there was more trust than competition. This strengthened relationships, helping teachers to work towards shared goals.
Collaboration	There were opportunities for inter-school interaction, facilitating sharing both within and beyond the network schools.
Enquiry	Apart from reflecting on their own practices, teachers from network schools were involved in giving feedback to other schools, resulting in a deepened understanding of the network focuses.

Leadership	The learning networks offered a range of leadership training opportunities, whether the members were holding formal leadership positions at school or not.
Accountability	The expected tasks, roles and learning outcomes were explained at the time the networks were launched. Network members were thus clear about the accountability issue. Tools such as evaluation forms and reflection logs were designed to track teacher progress.
Building capacity and support	The learning communities provided channels for capacity building and support. Network-based workshops, co-planning, and inter-school lesson observations were some of the platforms used to enable teachers to develop their professional knowledge.

2. School-based support






To strengthen the impact of networks, there was a dual mode of support incorporating network learning and school-based collaboration. Teachers gained knowledge and skills at school which were then reinforced through network learning. They then adapted and applied their learning in their school context. In this process of adaptation and application, the teachers were supported by an officer from the Language Learning Support Section (LLSS). Below is a summary of the strategies used for capacity building and curriculum leadership development over the years:

Strategy	Mode of learning	Rationale
Network learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network-based workshops • Network-based co-planning • Inter-school lesson observations: lesson preview, observation and post-lesson feedback sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network-based workshops and co-planning are not just a source of input, they also provide opportunities for teachers to explore multiple perspectives. Teachers do not merely consider their school context. They also get to know what is happening in other schools. The process of reflecting on how other schools have tackled similar issues can help them refine their school-based practices. • Through conducting lesson observations for professional development purposes, teachers can learn from quality feedback and share ideas in a stress-free environment.
School-based support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School-based workshops • School-based co-planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The regular school visits provide a platform for professional exchanges, empowering teachers to design a curriculum appropriate to the school context. • Professional development activities and co-planning meetings give teachers more input. They learn how to infuse the network focuses into their school-based curriculum plans.






What happened

The action plan below shows how professional capacity building and curriculum leadership development were fostered through a dual mode of support. Teachers identified specific focuses for each year and designed their curriculum with reference to the six key principles for effective learning and teaching (Galton, 2010).


Year 1 (2009-2010):





School focus	How it was developed	
<p>Capacity building: questioning and feedback techniques</p>	<p>Questioning and Feedback Techniques Learning Circle: Core project teachers of this school joined this Learning Circle organised by the Kwun Tong District School Development Section and LLSS to explore questioning and feedback techniques. As the teachers from Sau Ming Primary School had previously developed effective questioning and feedback practices, they were able to give support and input to teachers of four other schools in the same district. As the members of the network, the panel head, vice panel head and three English teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) attended a briefing session giving details of the network, e.g. purposes, focuses, members' roles and tasks, etc. (ii) attended a school-based workshop on questioning and feedback techniques conducted by LLSS to consolidate their prior knowledge of the topic (iii) conducted a workshop on questioning and feedback techniques for other schools with LLSS (iv) co-planned units with their LLSS officer (v) provided a platform for professional sharing by opening up a lesson focusing on questioning and feedback techniques (vi) gave feedback to other schools on lesson design in an inter-school co-planning meeting (vii) observed lessons conducted by other schools (viii) conducted project-end evaluation 	 <p>The teachers and LLSS officer holding a workshop on questioning and feedback techniques</p>  <p>The vice principal sharing her experience in language learning and teaching</p> 
<p>Curriculum leadership development through a mentoring system</p>	<p>1. Capacity building: After the school and network-based co-planning meetings, workshops and lesson observations, the teachers had a more thorough understanding of how to use questions and feedback to enhance learning and teaching. There was more use of questions of varied levels of complexity and questions were directed to more students, improving classroom dynamics.</p> <p>2. Curriculum leadership development: The teachers acted as mentors who conducted a workshop, led discussions and gave advice to other teachers. This experience enabled them to take a leading role, which in turn contributed to the development of the following curriculum leadership capabilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) the ability to propose concrete and workable actions (ii) enhanced subject and pedagogical knowledge (iii) the ability to communicate effectively with different parties 	 <p>Giving feedback to other schools on their lesson design</p>  <p>Conducting inter-school lesson observation</p>

Year 2 (2010-2011):



School focus	How it was developed	
<p>Capacity building: Galton's six principles (with a focus on questioning and feedback techniques and assessment for learning)</p>	<p>Quality Language Learning and Teaching Learning Circle: Together with two schools in the district, the school joined the Learning Circle again in the second year. The teachers took part in professional development activities as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) attended a briefing session giving details of the network, e.g. purposes, focuses, members' roles and tasks, etc. (ii) attended a workshop on Galton's six principles conducted by EDB officers (iii) co-planned units with their LLSS officer (iv) had inter-school co-planning meetings to introduce their unit/lesson design and give feedback on the design of other schools (v) took part in inter-school lesson observation sessions as observers and observees (vi) conducted project-end evaluation 	 <p>Reporting group views in the workshop</p>  <p>Introducing lesson design to observers</p>
<p>Curriculum leadership development through inter-school co-planning and lesson observation</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Capacity building: The panel head had strategically involved three teachers in the school-based workshop on questioning and feedback techniques in 2009-2010. The teachers then joined the Learning Circle in Year Two and made contributions by infusing questioning and feedback techniques into the unit/lesson design and making evidence-based comments on the lessons observed. They also focused on assessment for learning when designing units/lessons. 2. Curriculum leadership development: The teachers took turns to chair co-planning meetings, pre-lesson observation briefings and post-lesson observation sessions. They took on both pedagogical and administrative leadership roles. 	 <p>Conducting inter-school lesson observation</p>   <p>Making evidence-based comments</p>

Year 3 (2011-2012):

School focus	How it was developed	
<p>Capacity building: Enhancing classroom interaction</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Quality Language Learning and Teaching Learning Circle: The panel head, vice panel head and an English teacher, together with two schools in the same district and three schools from other districts joined the Learning Circle. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) attended a briefing session giving details of the network, e.g. purposes, focuses, members' roles and tasks, etc. (ii) attended workshops delivered by LLSS officers on Galton's six principles, conducting lesson observations, and conducting effective meetings 	 <p>Introducing the lesson to be observed</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (iii) co-planned units with their LLSS officer (iv) shared learning and teaching materials and gave feedback through an online platform (v) took part in inter-school lesson observation sessions as observers and observees (vi) conducted project-end evaluation 	 <p>Conducting inter-school lesson observation</p>
<p>Curriculum leadership development through lesson observations</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Capacity building: Since the teachers were involved in the learning community in 2009-2010, they found their prior knowledge helpful in increasing student participation. They tried to enhance student participation through various modes of interaction and improve classroom dynamics through effective questioning and feedback. 2. Curriculum leadership development: To further enhance curriculum leadership development, the school involved other curriculum leaders in the learning community so as to reinforce the skills in leading discussions and giving feedback. They also developed essential curriculum leadership qualities through attending theme-based workshops. 	 <p>Students listening to classmates' speeches</p>  <p>Students asking floor questions</p>  <p>The teacher observed reflecting on his lesson</p>

Year 3 and Year 4 (2011-2013):

School focus	How it was developed	
<p>Curriculum leadership development through participation in a curriculum leadership network</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Curriculum Leadership Development (CLD) Programme: The panel head and vice panel head joined the CLD Network organised by LLSS. Through theme-based workshops, inter-school lesson observations and school-based application, they developed essential curriculum leadership qualities. Apart from the workshops on conducting lesson observations and effective meetings, the teachers also attended workshops focusing on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) moving from planning to implementation (ii) using book inspection as an opportunity to look at student work (iii) evaluation and planning of the English subject (iv) staff recruitment and deployment 	 <p>Reviewing school practices</p>  <p>Sharing experiences with other schools</p>

2. Curriculum leadership development: The CLD workshops were relevant to the work of the panel heads. They provided opportunities to reflect on the professional development value of such regular tasks and duties as lesson observations and book inspection. The panel heads exchanged ideas with network teachers and transferred what they had learned to their school context. They then used a self-reflection log to record and reflect on the experience of implementing suggestions and recommendations made in the workshops and by the language support officer.

Impact

Positive impact on school-based curriculum

As there has always been a positive learning and sharing culture in the school, the teachers were ready to take in and try out new knowledge and skills to strengthen their curriculum design and teaching practices. As a result of their participation in the learning networks, the teachers believe that both learning and changes have taken place in their school. For example, after joining the networks, they realised that small class teaching principles can be applied in bigger classes and so over the last few years, they have tried out some of the principles in classes of different sizes to improve language learning.

Enhanced capacity building

The learning communities have contributed to the panel's capacity building in two ways. First, through observing lessons, the teachers were able to learn teaching strategies, which they then took back to their school. For example, they have learned how to increase student participation through an activity called "poster travel". In this activity, students have to take turns to write an idea on a poster. This can enhance class participation as everyone in the class has to contribute at least one idea. Second, they have mastered skills to review a lesson. As observed in some of the post-lesson feedback sessions, many of them used a lesson observation protocol to give comments. Also, by comparing their lesson feedback forms in different rounds of observation, we found that the comments given were more specific, objective and evidence-based.

Focus	Yes	No	Comment/example
asking a variety of questions	✓		
initiating higher-order thinking questions	✓		Why is it like to think that? - ask to predict the consequences of giving him that
providing enough wait time to students	✓		
giving reinforcement to students through verbal & non-verbal communication	✓		
giving constructive feedback	✓		Good that you when he made mistakes in his class "Excellent", "You're really smart", when he says you - explain use of the words/phrases, so that he can remember
rephrasing the questions to help students to answer	✓		Is it plain use of the words/phrases, so that he can answer
using questions to help students to clarify/elaborate a statement or comment	✓		
using questions to help students to make self-correction			
redirecting the questions to other students to enable them to participate and give additional comments	✓		When some students have diff opinions, Teacher thru to express their opinions (But there are other remarks to help he explain the class - Ask whether other he agree with their classmate based on what

jotting
down
brief
notes

Focus	Yes	No	Comment/example
asking a variety of questions	✓		He covering knowledge, comprehension and... application, evaluation & synthesis
initiating higher-order thinking questions	✓		Use of analysis - why? Application - what would you do? (Compare)
providing enough wait time to students	✓		Why could she not think of that? → helpful to - when he was not able to read, he was - give hints to help
giving reinforcement to students through verbal & non-verbal communication	✓		In teaching colleague work with the group to help them accomplish the tasks → - praise encourage them give ask in simple - questions → giving instructions: 5+4+0
giving constructive feedback	✓		- make sure to give some words of other rec → elicited lots of higher level thinking
rephrasing the questions to help students to answer	✓		- Is it difficult/difficult to walk down the stairs in a wheelchair? - what would he recon for?
using questions to help students to clarify/elaborate a statement or comment	✓		How can you tell that the fire was not the main? Just of them when he says - you don't use the diff, how do you get → use the stairs
using questions to help students to make self-correction	✓		- when you remember part of the story → in the fire, we don't use the diff
redirecting the questions to other students to enable them to participate and give additional comments	✓		- when he could not see, I redirected the other to - can't see → can other group describe the way with other words? - (name), would you like to help?
scaffolding students' learning with rich input	✓		- best he asked → obj. of positive structure - A reason for Ma-Lee to get the Earl (Lillian - friend → So you receive the old lady - not Ma-Lee should help the old woman

Giving evidence-based comments on the use of reinforcement:
"... (Teacher) worked with the groups to help them accomplish the tasks (and gave) a lot of encouragement: 'Try!'"

Giving evidence-based comments on the use of wait time:
"When students were not able to answer the word 'brave', wait and give hints to help."

A lesson observation form collected from a teacher after the first lesson observation

A lesson observation form collected from the same teacher after the second lesson observation

Enhanced curriculum leadership skills

The teachers have learned useful strategies from the CLD workshops. They have also changed their perception of routine tasks. They realise that they can turn administrative duties like conducting lesson observations and book inspections into professional development opportunities.

The teachers are glad that those who are not panel heads or level coordinators also have a chance to chair pre- and post-lesson observation meetings to build up their leadership skills. As they regard themselves as representatives of the school, they have tried their best in performing this leadership role and have become more proactive in leading discussions and sharing ideas.

Facilitating factors

Clear and timely goal setting

The purposes and focuses of the two networks were spelled out at the start of the school year. From the very beginning the teachers were aware of the goals and how the networks could address their concerns. They could also make early planning to align their subject plan with the requirements of the networks.

Support from the school management

Without the support from the school management, inter-school activities would not be possible. In this school, the principal and vice principal gave teachers space to participate in learning communities outside the school. They gave professional advice and rescheduled lessons to make room for inter-school activities. They also made plans for school-based professional development activities for all English teachers before and after they took part in the learning communities.

Focus on improvement

In all the network activities, the interaction among the teachers was frequent and their actions were governed by shared norms focused on the practice and improvement of learning and teaching. For example, through looking at student work together and conducting lesson observations, they engaged in a collective and critical scrutiny of students' performance which helped them improve their teaching practice and facilitated their professional development.

Difficulties and suggestions

How to maximise learning

It can be hard to address the needs of schools from very different backgrounds. If a cluster of schools have similar school contexts and share similar goals, it is easier to locate good and less effective practices that can be used as the basis for professional exchanges. If the schools speak the same "language", these exchanges are more effective. Therefore, for a learning community to succeed, the school selection criteria should be clear and member schools should share similar concerns.

Who should be trained

Schools often face the problem of not having enough curriculum leaders. Apart from developing panel heads or coordinators, we should also give potential leaders opportunities to develop their curriculum leadership skills so that they can exercise their leadership in different ways.



Way forward

With the knowledge and skills gained, the panel head and vice panel head will reinforce what they learned through participation in the CLD Programme, inter-school visits and school-based application next year. The level coordinators will strengthen their learning by taking on the role of Academic Study Coordinators (ASC) who are responsible for giving professional advice and facilitating sharing during their internal lesson study exercise at each level. The teachers think that their school practices and network learning can complement each other in building teachers' capacity and nurturing curriculum leaders, and hope what they have learned can be sustained in their school.

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**Sau Ming Primary School
Florence YIP (Language Support Officer)**

Fostering the long term development of the English subject through strategic use of human talents and high learning value programmes

Background

“We have been suffering from teacher turnover these years especially when any extra funding given has been used up.”

“Many of my students are really weak in different areas of English learning and diversity in my class is huge.”

“We have done so much in class, after school or even during holidays and yet we don’t find any noticeable improvement in students’ motivation and ability.” ...

All these “complaints” sound very familiar. Subject leaders and teachers have grave concerns about how these problems can be overcome to bring about effective learning and teaching of English. Cotton Spinners Association Secondary School decided to nurture a critical mass of curriculum leaders in the English Department with a view to developing a learning community and strengthening the professional capacity of the whole team. To enable them to make meaningful contributions to the Department, they were assigned to lead different subject level innovations which aimed to narrow the learning gap of the weaker students, stretch the performance of the average to above average group, and prepare junior secondary students for the demands of the New Senior Secondary Curriculum (NSSC).

Target group and levels

English Panel head, Assistant Panel head, 5 English teachers

Selected classes/groups in S1 – S5

Strategies used

1. Grooming of a group of enthusiastic teachers who display leadership potential and creating a platform for them to work as a team

Danielson (2006) recognises the importance of developing leadership among teacher leaders who are not assigned to formal leadership positions, but would earn their authority through their work with both the students and their colleagues. Due to the informal and voluntary nature of their leadership role, teacher leaders are more likely to go the extra mile to help the students they serve. The cultivation of teacher leadership is a wise investment for a school committed to improving practice over the long term. Moreover, it is increasingly recognised that if schools are to achieve better results with their students, it must be a collective endeavour rather than a collection of individual efforts. Hence, a team, with a combination of formal and informal leaders, was formed to lead some subject level innovations.

2. Adoption of a focused and coherent approach to improvement

In a study conducted on the improving performance of the school systems in different parts of the world, Levin (2012) reported that, among the various strategies identified, what matters most is the presence of a clear focus of improvement and strong coherence among tasks. With consensus among the team, catering for learner diversity and meeting the challenges of the NSSC were identified as the focus of improvement.

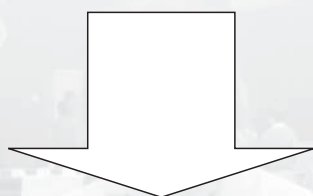
To this end, we made use of two subject level tasks, i.e. reforming the English Society to offer high learning value activities for targeted groups of students and infusing School-based Assessment (SBA) into the junior secondary curriculum to prepare students for the language demands of the NSSC.

What happened

Our collaborative actions follow the evaluation-planning-implementation-evaluation (EPIE) cycle.

Evaluation – To identify the improvement targets

Focus of evaluation	Key finding	Reflection
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of the NSSC Results in HKDSE (2012) Students' performance in SBA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The percentage of students attaining levels 3 and 4 is comparatively small. Students performed better in speaking and worse in reading. Students lacked confidence and skills in doing individual presentation and had little to contribute in group discussions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to stretch the potential of the average and above average group of students at the senior secondary level?
Effectiveness of the English Society <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The learning value of the English activities The role of the English Ambassadors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many of the activities held (e.g. English Quiz, Stall Games) were one-off and of low learning value. Participation was confined to a small group of students. The English Ambassadors (average to high performing students) were engaged in administrative chores like taking attendance and keeping discipline, setting up games and playing movies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to enhance students' confidence in using English in a non-threatening atmosphere? How to help students build a better foundation at the junior secondary level and reduce the achievement gap of the weaker students?
Classroom learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Motivation Confidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning motivation of junior form students was in general satisfactory. Confidence in ability to speak English was on the whole lacking. 	



Improvement target 1: To cater for learner diversity

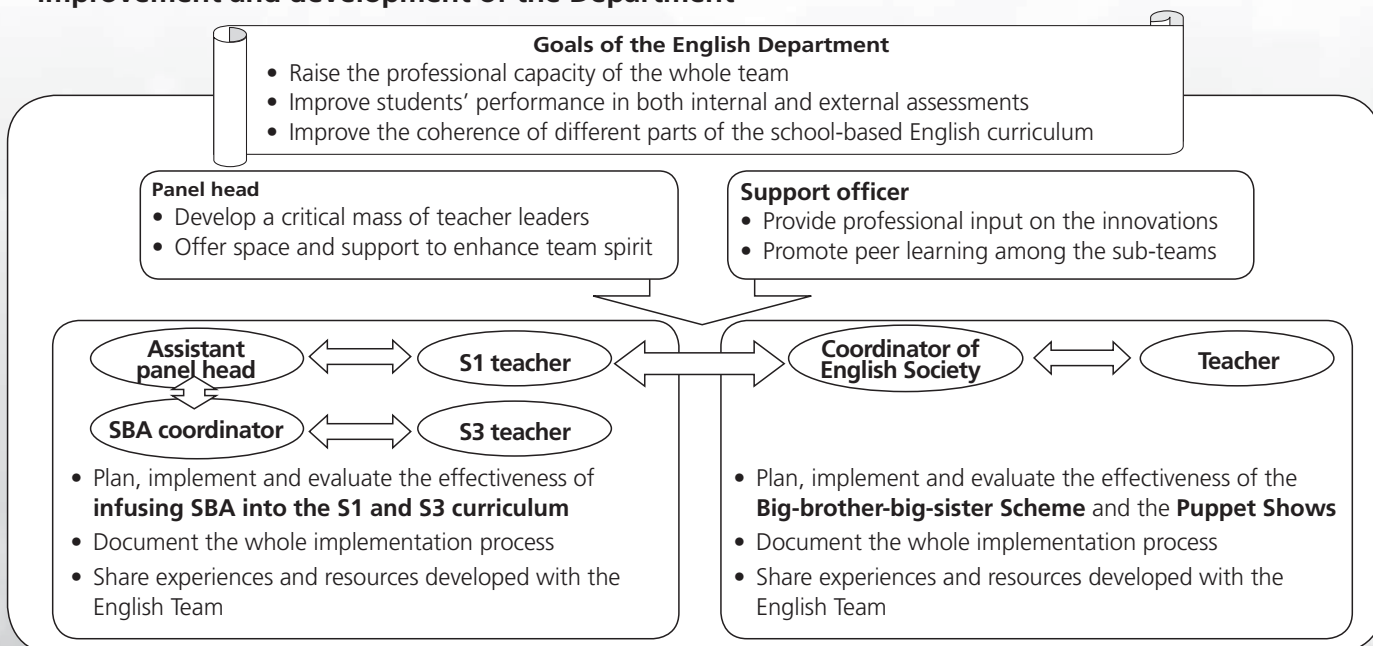
Improvement target 2: To prepare students for the demands of the NSSC

Planning – To align the improvement targets with the long term development of the English Department

1. Identification of innovations that address the key findings of the evaluation

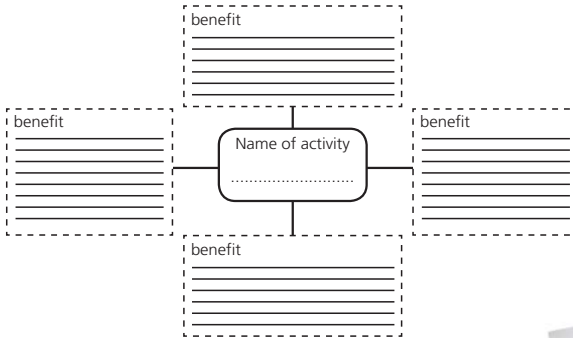


Innovation	Infusing SBA into the JS English curriculum	Reforming the English Society – Introducing the Big-brother-big-sister Scheme	Reforming the English Society – Conducting Lunchtime Puppet Shows
Key objective	Integrate reading with speaking and writing	Cater for learner diversity at S1	Offer high learning value English activities
Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build up confidence and skills required for the individual presentation and group discussion tasks Help students make use of assessment criteria and feedback to improve their performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer regular out-of-class support for weak but motivated S1 students to improve vocabulary and reading Develop mentoring skills of the English Ambassadors (who have average to above average performance) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop research, script writing and presentation skills (for performers) Develop listening skills and interest in learning English (for audience)
Level	S1 and S3	25 S1 Tutees 20+ S3–S5 Ambassadors	Ambassadors as performers S1 and S2 as audience
Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infuse the knowledge and skills required into each unit progressively Design speaking tasks that require students to draw upon their learning from reading and writing Record students’ performance for teaching and feedback purposes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote service learning experiences which can be added to the OLE record of the ambassadors Choose exam/test relevant learning content from the S1 curriculum Communicate regularly with the S1 teachers on the progress of their students in class 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of a learning log to help the ambassadors capture and reflect on their learning experience Integrate knowledge and skills learned from the Compulsory and Elective Parts (Short Stories, Drama, Social Issues and Popular Culture) in preparing the scripts



2. Strategic grouping and deployment of the teachers to pave the way for sustaining the improvement and development of the Department



Implementation and evaluation

1. Infusing SBA into the S1 and S3 curriculum: an example is taken from a unit on Pop Life taught in S3 for illustration

Step	Detail/Example of material used			
Identify the speaking skills to be taught across the 3 years (adapted from the assessment criteria in the C&A Guide)	Pronunciation and delivery <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Pronounce all simple sounds clearly ✓ Speak at a careful pace ✓ Use sufficient basic intonation convention 	Communication strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Use appropriate body language to display interest in the interaction ✓ Use appropriate but simple turn-taking strategies to participate in, and occasionally initiate interaction ✓ Use formulaic expressions as communication strategies ✓ Must not read directly from notes 	Vocabulary and language patterns <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Simple vocabulary and language patterns ✓ Self-correct simple errors 	Ideas and organisation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Relevant ideas put sequentially with some links among own ideas and with those presented by others ✓ Respond to some simple questions ✓ Expand the responses when addressed directly
Infuse relevant skills into the unit by spelling out the related objectives and the steps that lead to the speaking task	<p style="text-align: center;">Pop Life</p> <p>Objective: At the end of the unit, students in groups of 4</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. have to create a new school club of interest for the next school year (must include 3 activities to be held in the club and the benefits of those activities) 2. have to present their work to the class confidently 		<p style="text-align: center;">Task Implementation</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students read several texts on hobbies and activities 2. Students analysed the texts and filled in the graphic organiser (what are the activities and the benefits of joining such activities) 3. Teacher explained the SBA assessment criteria to students 4. Teacher demonstrated to students what should and should not be done in SBA 	
Design tools that help students transfer the reading input to the writing and then use this in the oral presentation task	<p style="text-align: center;">Unit 1-Graphic Organisers</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <div style="float: right; border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 15px; padding: 10px; margin-top: 20px;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name the activity of the school club • Write at least 3 benefits of the activity </div>			
Get students to do the oral presentation with the help of the poster they designed	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;">  <div style="margin-left: 20px;">  </div> </div>			

<p>Get them to practise for the performance by making reference to the expectations set for the year (taken from the expected learning outcomes of the programme plan)</p>	<p><u>Speaking skills</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Pronunciation and accuracy (b) Clarity of speech (c) Fluency (ease of language production) (d) Intonation <p><u>Writing skills</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Writing up scripts (b) Designing worksheets (c) Setting up questionnaires <p><u>Others</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Research skills (b) Collaborative skills 	<p><u>First Performance</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pronunciation and accuracy • Clarity of speech • Writing up scripts <p><u>Second Performance</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fluency (ease of language production) • Designing worksheets <p><u>Third Performance</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intonation • Setting up questionnaires
<p>After the performance, S2 students are expected to answer questions asked by the ambassadors. This ensures S2 students make good use of their listening and speaking skills and stay on task</p> 	<p>For S1 and S2 students (audience)</p> <p><u>Listening skills</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Listen for vocabulary (b) Listen for information (c) Listen for tones and moods (for third performance) <p><u>Speaking Skills</u></p> <p>Questioning skills</p> 	<p style="text-align: center;">Puppet Show <i>English Corner Plus</i></p> <p>Did you enjoy the puppet show? Now, we would like you to answer the following questions.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Who is your favourite character in the puppet show? Put a tick in the box next to your favourite character. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bajie () Wujing () Winnie the Pooh () Jump Jump Tiger () 2. What are the three social issues mentioned? <hr/> <hr/> 3. What was the little girl doing the day before the end of the world? <hr/> <hr/> 4. What did the bride do after the netizens said bad things about her? <hr/> <hr/>

Design relevant methods and tools for evaluation and giving feedback to both the S1 teachers and the students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uniform test performance of S1 students • Attendance record • Self-evaluation forms for Ambassadors • Questionnaire for S1 students • Teachers' observation 												
Get the ambassadors to self-evaluate their performance by making use of the reflection log	<p>Big-brother-big sister Scheme</p> <p>Meeting Log</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="448 607 1481 689"> <thead> <tr> <th>Date</th> <th>Time</th> <th>What we did</th> <th>Remarks</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Reflection</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="448 768 1481 1014"> <tr> <td data-bbox="448 768 692 936"> Time </td> <td data-bbox="692 768 1481 936"> <i>Did I face any difficulties? How did I solve these problems? Did I learn anything from the scheme? How can I do it better? Any other ideas about the scheme? What is your most unforgettable incident?</i> </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="448 936 692 1014"> After the first Exam </td> <td data-bbox="692 936 1481 1014"> </td> </tr> </table>	Date	Time	What we did	Remarks					Time	<i>Did I face any difficulties? How did I solve these problems? Did I learn anything from the scheme? How can I do it better? Any other ideas about the scheme? What is your most unforgettable incident?</i>	After the first Exam	
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After the first Exam													

Impact

1. Infusion of SBA into the S1 and S3 curriculum

- This was the first time that new modes of learning, i.e. using peer evaluation with reference to a set of assessment criteria and performing in front of a camera, were used. Students were very excited and serious about their learning. Even the weaker students at both levels had become more confident in front of the camera the second time they did their presentation. Such confidence was exhibited by the grasp of the meta-language taught. For instance, they stood more at ease and maintained eye-contact with the audience when presenting their posters (for S3)/camping plans (for S1). They spoke audibly and fluently.
- Stronger students were able to attempt more challenging tasks. In one of the S1 classes, students were asked to prepare a shopping list for a camping activity. During the discussion, they were able to make reference to the notes they had prepared, take turns to give suggestions and elaborate their choices with reasons.

2. Lunchtime puppet show

- Doing the puppet show was a totally new experience for the English Ambassadors. The performances provided them with ample opportunities to practise reading, script writing and performing the play together. From reading their reflection logs, it is encouraging to find that the intended objectives were realised. Below are some examples taken from their reflection logs.

I know team work is very important. Some members help me to speak up.

I learn many new words and know more about current affairs.

I have a new try. I sing some English songs.

I have become more confident in learning English!

3. Big-brother-big-sister Scheme

- This Scheme aims to raise the English performance of the weaker S1 students. Out of the 25 participants, 64% showed noticeable improvement in the final exam.
- 92% of the participants found the scheme helpful. In particular, it provided them with an opportunity to learn and improve their English.
- 92% of the participants agreed/strongly agreed that the mentors (Ambassadors) were well-prepared, serious and motivated them to seek help.
- S1 teachers found that all the participants had shown some/good improvement.
- The Ambassadors reported that they had learned more new words and used different problem solving skills in handling the mentees. Here is an interesting episode.

“When I first saw the child, he hated me because he didn’t like me to teach him...I saw his hand touch his mouth. I know he likes eating snacks, maybe candies. I told him if he could spell and know the meaning of all the words, I would give him one candy. The second day, he got full marks in his dictation...”

4. Curriculum leadership development

Their self-reflection, our sharing sessions and my own observations indicated that there has been significant growth in different aspects of teachers’ leadership capabilities. Evident improvement was found in the following capabilities:

- Use data effectively for planning and reflection: The teachers have become familiar with the use of the EPIE cycle in both subject level tasks and day-to-day classroom teaching.
- Propose concrete and workable actions: The tasks were aligned with the objectives and the steps were carefully sequenced.
- Establish monitoring and evaluation mechanism: A variety of assessment methods (e.g. peer assessment, self-reflection) involving different parties (e.g. the teachers, the Ambassadors, the S1 mentees) were employed at different stages to obtain feedback and results.
- Demonstrate subject and pedagogical knowledge: Teachers showed a thorough understanding of the demands of the NSSC. They were able to incorporate the knowledge and skills required into the planning of the innovations and used appropriate strategies to motivate and support their students to achieve the learning targets.
- Communicate effectively with different parties: Though there is a clear task allocation among the three pairs, they always worked as a team to share problems, exchange ideas and provide peer support. The sharing they did with the whole English Team at the end of the school year illustrated vividly how all tasks were connected and aligned, and how their concerted efforts could lead to the sustainable development of the department.

Facilitating factors

1. Taking a broader view on teacher leadership

All teachers are perceived as leaders. The greater the number of leaders developed, the more likely the department will be able to practise distributed leadership in future.

2. Strategic selection and grouping of the teacher leaders

The principal and the panel head have strategically brought together formal leaders and informal leaders, experienced and less experienced teachers. Yet, all of them are enthusiastic and effective teachers.

3. Assigning important tasks which address both the needs of the students and enable the teacher leaders to develop their leadership capabilities

Instead of being over-ambitious, the department has decided to focus their efforts on how to better equip students to meet the challenges of the senior secondary curriculum. Through assigning teachers tasks with a higher level of responsibility (in addition to classroom teaching), teachers could develop a more holistic perspective about the curriculum, and experience an intensive learning process of planning, implementing and evaluating a more macro level task.

4. Presence of a genuine collaborative and learning community

There is a clear and collective focus on improving student learning. Discussing issues by making reference to learning evidence, working out solutions together, opening up lessons for peer learning and documenting important artifacts have become the norms of the team.

Way forward

To sustain these positive experiences, the team will continue with the above innovations. Improvement/extension will be made in the following areas:

- improving the content and organisation aspects of students' presentation and group discussion in the SBA tasks for S1 and S3
- infusing SBA elements into the S2 curriculum
- developing a systematic resource bank to capture all the curriculum materials and students' performance for training students and sharing among teachers
- strengthening the training for the English Ambassadors (e.g. script writing, problem-solving skills)
- increasing the number of English Ambassadors and S1 and S2 tutees so that more students can benefit
- engaging other members of the department so that the capacity of the whole English team can be strengthened

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Cotton Spinners Association Secondary School
Betty LEUNG (Language Support Officer)

Cheung Chau Learning Circle: A case of a district network supporting teacher professional development

Background

The Cheung Chau Learning Circle (CCLC) is a district network consisting of two secondary schools and three primary schools on the island. The schools joined hands to initiate a language enrichment programme that could bring together both teachers and students from the five schools to address issues of common concern. This project was fully supported by both the Language Learning Support Section (LLSS) and the Wanchai and Islands District School Development Section.

Levels

P2/P3, S2

Strategies used

The CCLC was meant to be a professional hub for teachers, focused on a collaborative exploration of ways of improving learning and teaching. Jackson (2002) describes the role of networks as follows:

“...in education as in other fields, networks have a key role to play in supporting innovation and development. Accordingly, networks need to be regarded as support structures for innovative schools - facilitative, too, of the dissemination of both ‘good process’ and ‘good practice...”

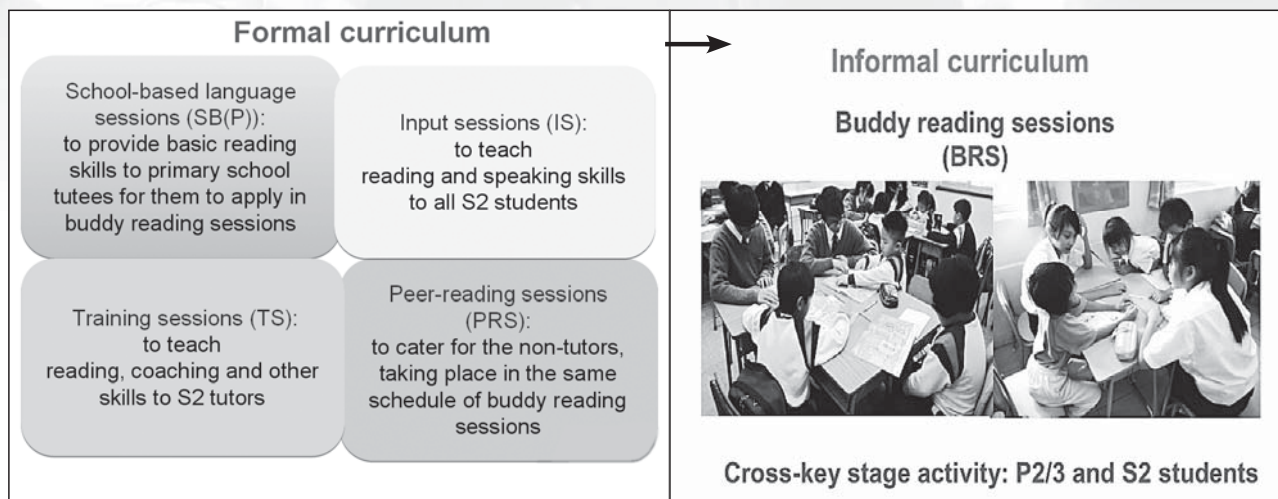
The team (including teachers and EDB officers) devised an English Enrichment Programme with a core component: a cross-key stage buddy reading programme (for P2/3 students, and S2 students), and four other supporting components: school-based language sessions (P2/3 students), training sessions for tutors, input sessions, and school-based language sessions/peer reading sessions for S2 students. The following table shows how the CCLC addressed the needs of different stakeholders:

Stakeholder	Objective/Need	Strategy
Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establish professional platform to share concerns and address needs collaboratively• Refresh subject knowledge and teaching methods and skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engage in the completion of a wide range of professional tasks related to the teaching of literacy• Use multiple opportunities to discuss strategies and design materials
Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop confidence in using English inside and outside the classroom• Achieve Basic Competency in reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Buddy reading programme• School-based language sessions (P2/3 students)• Training sessions for tutors• Input sessions for all S2 students• School-based language sessions/peer reading sessions for S2 non-tutors

What happened

The English Enrichment Programme was launched in 2011-12. It was reviewed and modified for a re-run in 2012-13 for the next cohort of primary and secondary students.

1. Key components of the English Enrichment Programme

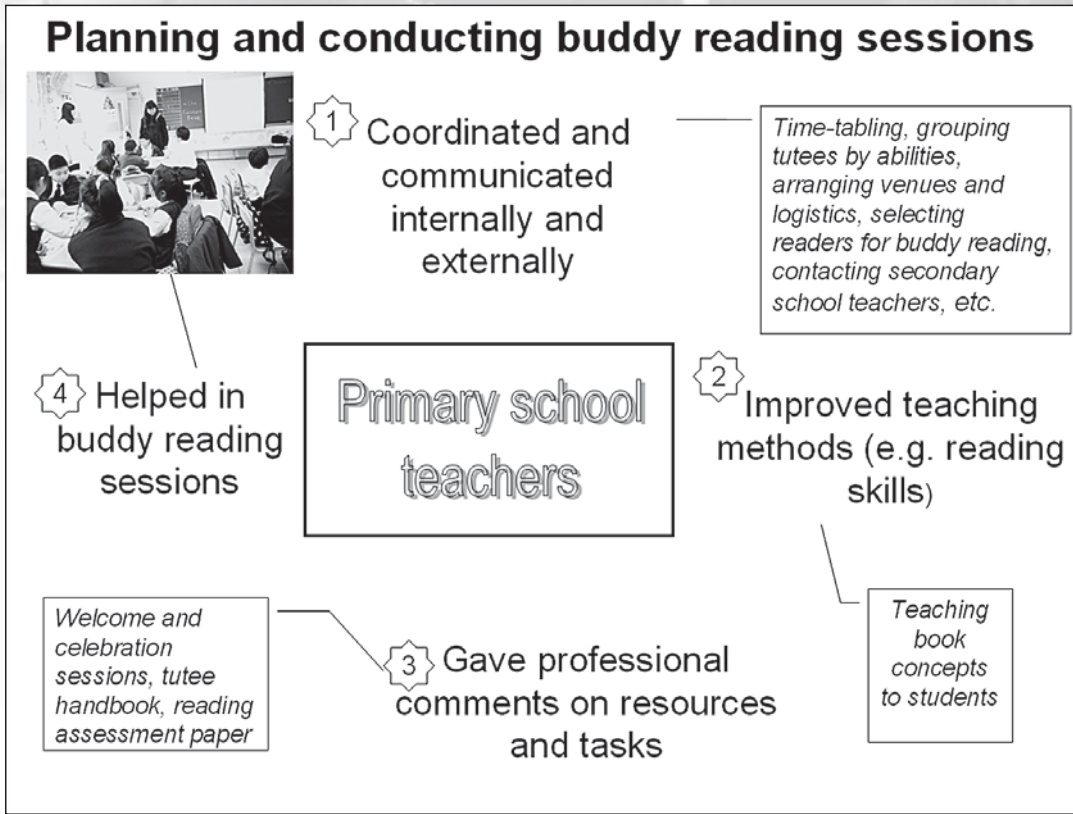


2. Schedule of implementation

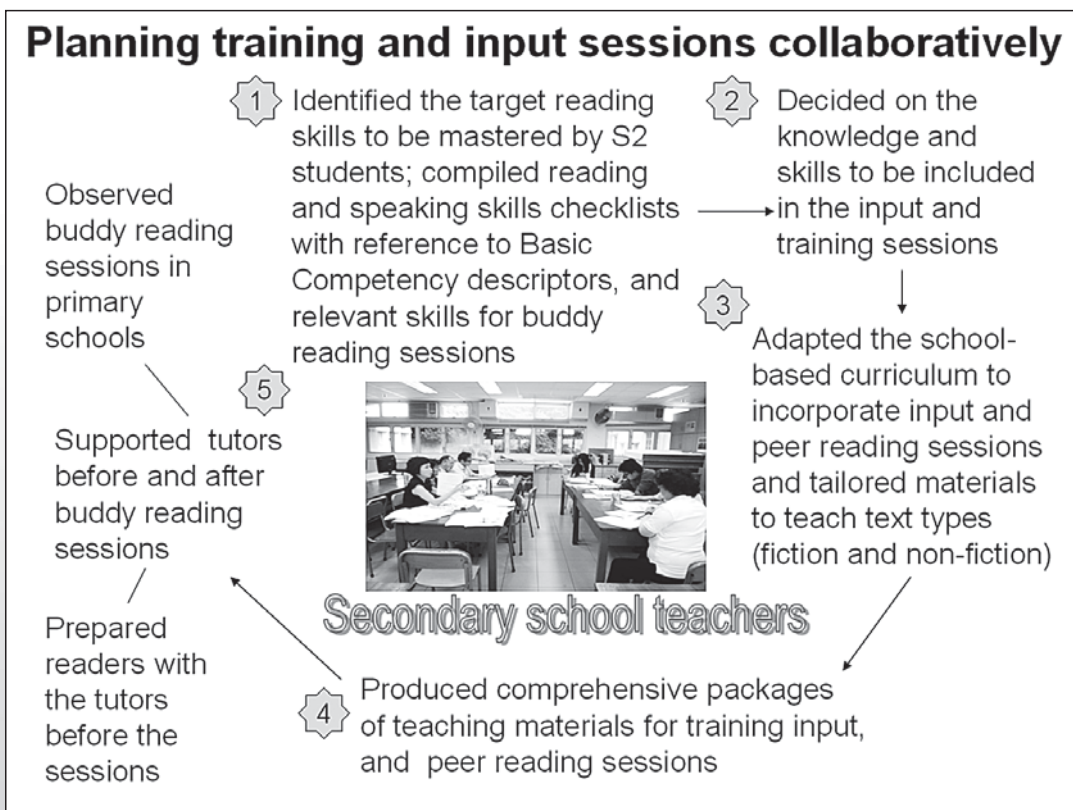
	SB(P)	TS	IS	BRS	PRS
Sept	✓				
Oct	✓	✓	✓		
Nov	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dec	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Jan	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Feb	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mar	✓		✓	✓	✓
Apr	✓		✓	✓	✓
May	✓			✓	✓
Jun					
Jul	Evaluation				

3. Collaboration tasks

- Professional tasks of primary school teachers




- Professional tasks of secondary school teachers




The programme also provided **diverse opportunities** for teachers to share experiences, concerns, and perspectives.

• Annual inter-school meetings


Meetings on setting up the programme




2011-12



Meetings on evaluating and reviewing the programme



2012-13



Impact

In order to gauge the impact of this project on the development of teachers' professional capacity, the team used an end-of-year questionnaire (June 2013). The teachers reflected that by working on a wide range of professional tasks and engaging in professional discussions with colleagues from partner schools, they had:

- developed enhanced knowledge and skills in curriculum planning (Primary teachers: 88%; Secondary teachers: 88%)
- developed knowledge and skills in planning and conducting a cross-key stage buddy reading programme (Primary teachers: 63%; Secondary teachers: 75%)
- nurtured a collaborative and open culture among schools on the island (Primary teachers: 88%; Secondary teachers: 88%)

Training sessions for S2 tutors



Secondary school teachers



Primary school teachers



Secondary school teachers



Secondary school teachers



Teachers refreshed their pedagogical knowledge and presented in the various English Enrichment Programme sessions

1. Development of teachers' skills in curriculum planning

The CCLC played a key role in 'supporting innovation and development for schools' (Hopkins, 2003, p. 158) in its member schools to create changes in the traditional curriculum practice. Teachers needed to enhance their knowledge and skills in curriculum planning in order to meet the needs of the English Enrichment Programme. According to the evaluation survey results, the teachers learned how to align the formal curriculum and the informal curriculum, and align curriculum and assessment. Besides, the primary school teachers used assessment data (e.g. two oral rating results and reading skills assessment in buddy reading sessions) to plan remedial measures. Moreover, the teachers also applied their professional knowledge in preparation for the buddy reading activity such as implementing an 'auditing exercise' of the school readers, making professional decisions on selection and purchase of books (fiction and non-fiction), and giving suggestions on supportive resources such as the handbooks for buddy reading sessions and oral rating assessment. For secondary school teachers, the evaluation survey results showed that they refreshed their knowledge of Basic Competency skills (reading and speaking) required for KS3, enhanced knowledge of text types, and improved explicit teaching of reading and speaking skills. A secondary school coordinator reflected in her evaluation that she had a better understanding of the primary school context after participating in the programme and that the contextual knowledge was useful for her when planning her teaching of S1 students.

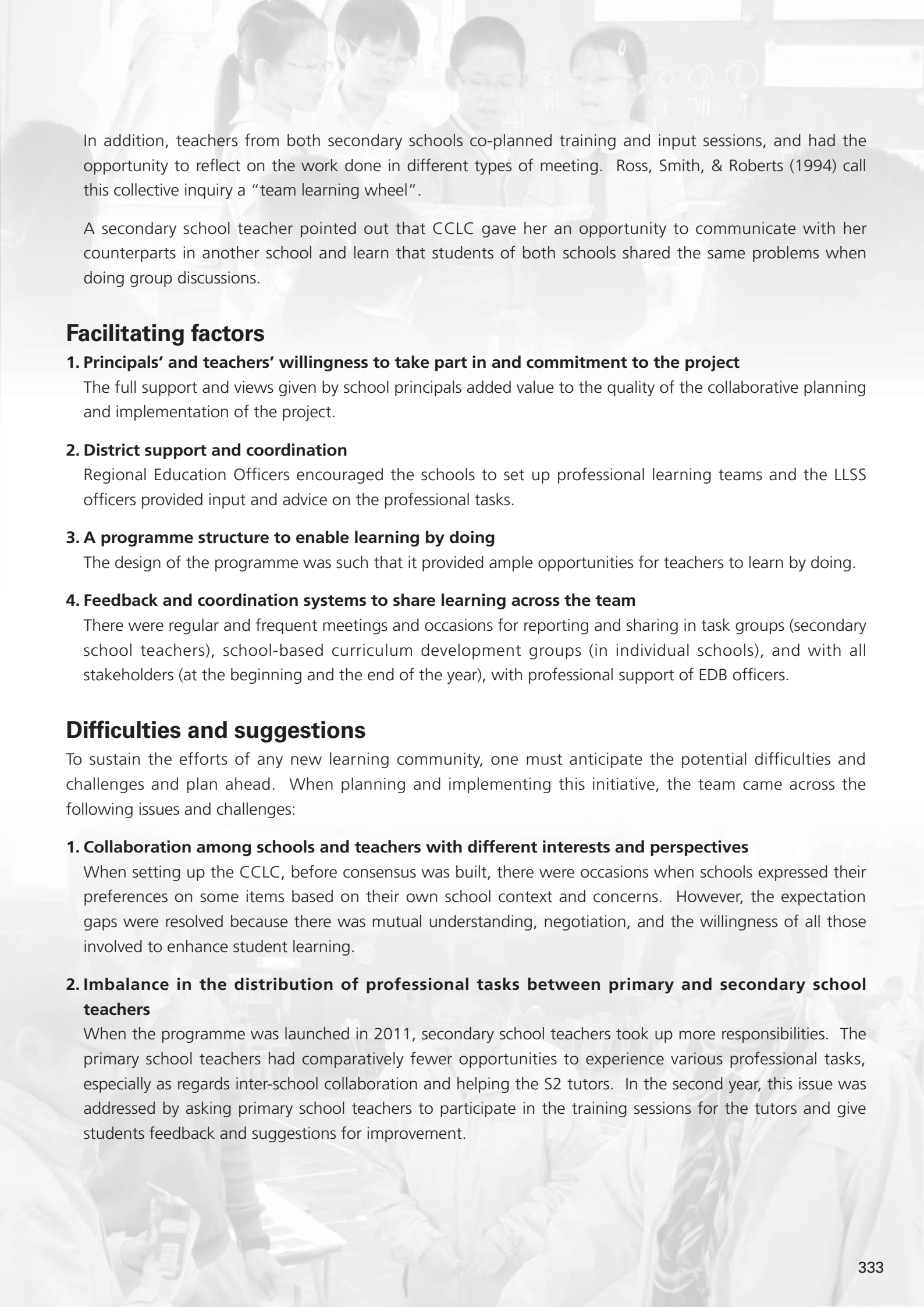
2. Development of teachers' skills in planning and implementing a cross-key stage project

Based on the survey results, both primary and secondary schools noted that they obtained knowledge of how to coordinate the work of different parties and communicate professional messages effectively, as well as help tutees before buddy reading sessions. Primary schools used special strategies to make more effective use of the programme for teacher development. For example, a primary school appointed different teachers in two consecutive school years as their school CCLC coordinator so as to provide more teachers with the experience of participating in inter-school projects. Another primary school arranged for all English language teachers to take turns to monitor the 10 buddy reading sessions so that all teachers could learn how to conduct this kind of activity.

Because of the nature of the programme, secondary school teachers had to design packages for three components (i.e. training, input and peer sessions) and they had to give ongoing guidance and help to S2 tutors before each buddy reading session. Thus their workload was considerable, but at the same time they acquired good knowledge and skills in planning and implementing a worthwhile initiative. Their recognition of the intrinsic value of this task is reflected in the high rate of agreement (88%) that the programme had helped them develop knowledge and skills in planning and conducting a cross-key stage buddy reading activity. The survey results also showed that they felt that they had particularly improved their subject knowledge especially as regards the teaching of reading and speaking skills. The need to accommodate the input and training sessions in the formal curriculum also meant that the teachers had to think carefully about how to align the formal and informal curricula.

3. Development of a collaborative culture in the English panels of the schools involved in the project

In the evaluation survey, both primary and secondary school teachers indicated that a collaborative and open culture had been fostered. They pointed out that this culture was nurtured through participation in tutors' training sessions and in the annual inter-school project meetings.



In addition, teachers from both secondary schools co-planned training and input sessions, and had the opportunity to reflect on the work done in different types of meeting. Ross, Smith, & Roberts (1994) call this collective inquiry a “team learning wheel”.

A secondary school teacher pointed out that CCLC gave her an opportunity to communicate with her counterparts in another school and learn that students of both schools shared the same problems when doing group discussions.

Facilitating factors

1. Principals’ and teachers’ willingness to take part in and commitment to the project

The full support and views given by school principals added value to the quality of the collaborative planning and implementation of the project.

2. District support and coordination

Regional Education Officers encouraged the schools to set up professional learning teams and the LLSS officers provided input and advice on the professional tasks.

3. A programme structure to enable learning by doing

The design of the programme was such that it provided ample opportunities for teachers to learn by doing.

4. Feedback and coordination systems to share learning across the team

There were regular and frequent meetings and occasions for reporting and sharing in task groups (secondary school teachers), school-based curriculum development groups (in individual schools), and with all stakeholders (at the beginning and the end of the year), with professional support of EDB officers.

Difficulties and suggestions

To sustain the efforts of any new learning community, one must anticipate the potential difficulties and challenges and plan ahead. When planning and implementing this initiative, the team came across the following issues and challenges:

1. Collaboration among schools and teachers with different interests and perspectives

When setting up the CCLC, before consensus was built, there were occasions when schools expressed their preferences on some items based on their own school context and concerns. However, the expectation gaps were resolved because there was mutual understanding, negotiation, and the willingness of all those involved to enhance student learning.

2. Imbalance in the distribution of professional tasks between primary and secondary school teachers

When the programme was launched in 2011, secondary school teachers took up more responsibilities. The primary school teachers had comparatively fewer opportunities to experience various professional tasks, especially as regards inter-school collaboration and helping the S2 tutors. In the second year, this issue was addressed by asking primary school teachers to participate in the training sessions for the tutors and give students feedback and suggestions for improvement.

3. Time constraints

In the first year, when the programme was launched, the teachers needed to meet many deadlines for their administrative and professional tasks. It was good to see that the quality of the programme was not compromised and teachers showed patience and resilience. As a substantial part of the work was done in the first year, the second stage of the project was easier to implement.

Way forward

The Cheung Chau Learning Circle is an example of how different stakeholders may participate and cooperate to fully support student learning through an inter-school language enrichment project. In 2013-14, a secondary school will take up the role of a convenor to liaise with all members of the network, so that members can continue to explore new learning opportunities, and determine collective expectations with other schools. The Cheung Chau Learning Circle is gradually moving from a supported network to a self-supporting network in the new school year. To enhance sustainability, the team may review the experience of implementing the English Enrichment Programme, strengthen and bridge the link between the formal and informal curricula, draw up a teacher and tutor succession plan, and ensure that the network continues to be an opportunity for enquiry and reflection.

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