

How formative assessment supports the learning of less motivated English learners

Background

Catering for learner diversity has always been a concern for most schools. Hing Tak School has been admitting a mixture of local and cross-border students these years. Many of them lack parental support. They display little confidence in learning English and are particularly weak in writing. Repeated failures in tests and examinations are discouraging to both students and teachers. To achieve a breakthrough, teachers decided to review their assessment practices with a view to finding out the causes and trying out a range of actions to tackle the specific problems in students' writing.

Level

P5

Strategies used

The collaborative actions basically follow the EPIE (**E**valuation-**P**lanning-**I**mplementation-**E**valuation) cycle. The following steps were taken to enhance the assessment literacy of the teachers and to widen their repertoire of strategies to cater for the needs of less proficient students.

1. Collecting assessment data relevant to the development focus
2. Interpreting assessment data to identify patterns of performance
3. Analysing causes of the problem and formulating a course of actions
4. Evaluating the effectiveness of the actions using various formative evaluation tools (For example, students were asked to do pre- and post-tests to find out their writing standards and improvements. Student writing samples were also collected and analysed. Also, a survey and an interview were used to obtain students' views on the project.)

What happened

To help students improve their writing, teachers used assessment data to inform their instruction. First, they identified students' problems in learning vocabulary and writing skills. Then they designed a course of actions to improve learning and teaching. Finally, they did a post-test to find out if the measures were effective. The following steps show how teachers used students' writing data to improve learning and teaching.

Step one: Deciding what data should be collected

The school's focus was to improve students' writing skills. To gather learning evidence, students were asked to do a writing test adapted from a Territory-wide System Assessment writing paper. Teachers then collected student writing samples of different ability groups for further analysis.

Step two: Interpreting the data to find a pattern

After studying students’ test scripts, the following strengths and weaknesses were identified:

- For stronger students, they could add their own ideas and organise their ideas coherently; yet their ideas were a bit general as they could not give specific details.
- For average students, they could only manage with the requirements of the writing but without adding own ideas to the writing.
- For less proficient students, they had difficulties in expressing ideas and the ideas were incoherent with lots of grammatical mistakes.

Step three: Analysing causes and forming a course of actions

After examining students’ work samples, teachers discussed the possible causes and planned for follow-up actions.

Problem one: Lacking vocabulary in writing

Possible causes	Actions taken
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students did not understand the words taught in lessons and they did not do revision at home. • Students who learned the words in class were not aware of using them in their writing. <div data-bbox="165 1429 719 1720" data-label="Image"> </div> <p data-bbox="165 1720 719 1753">Teacher used games to review vocabulary with students.</p> <div data-bbox="165 1783 719 2092" data-label="Image"> </div> <p data-bbox="165 2092 719 2130">Teacher taught vocabulary explicitly.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocabulary items were taught explicitly following the “pronounce-explain-examples-assess” procedure. • Writing tasks well aligned with the teaching and learning objectives were designed so that students could use the target words learned in their writing. • Students were given clear instructions and expectations in each writing task so that they knew what they were expected to do. • Games were used to motivate students to learn vocabulary. • Teachers used Kahoot! to do a short vocabulary revision quiz after each unit so as to help students develop a habit of revising words learned in a fun way. As Kahoot! could generate reports showing the problematic words of the whole class, teachers would reteach the words immediately.

Problem two: Lacking ideas in writing

Possible causes	Actions taken
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Students lacked training in thinking skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Teachers strengthened the teaching of 5W1H questions.Brainstorming techniques would be practised more often in class. For example, teachers did carousel brainstorming before writing so that each group could add extra ideas for other groups.

Problem three: Lacking elaboration skills

Possible causes	Actions taken
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Students did not know how to develop a paragraph.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Teachers taught students how to develop a paragraph following a “traffic lights approach”. It is a technique to help students remember what to write in a paragraph. <p>Below is an example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Red Stop and think about your main idea.Yellow Get ready to go by giving examples or reasons.Green Conclude the paragraph and go. <p>A sample student script is shown below: “There are two reasons why gardening is my favourite hobby. First, gardening can help me relax. Second, I can grow beautiful flowers and give them to my mother. So I like gardening very much.”</p>

Problem four: Lacking perseverance to work hard

Possible causes	Actions taken
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Many students, the cross-border students in particular, have limited exposure to English. They lost confidence in learning English when they got poor results in tests and examinations. Worse still, they would give up easily.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teachers decided to teach students the importance of perseverance by:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– changing their fixed mindset to a growth mindset,– helping students set achievable goals and complete a learning contract, and– showing them the experience of overcoming obstacles from famous historical figures such as Helen Keller and Steve Jobs

Impact on students

Students were asked to do a post-test after implementing the above measures. At the end of the term, it was found that:

- more proficient students could improve their writing by adding more own ideas, giving more specific details and using appropriate cohesive devices to link the ideas. Also, they made fewer grammatical mistakes than those in the pre-test;
- average students showed better understanding of the topic. Some could elaborate with examples and use appropriate cohesive devices as well; and
- less proficient students were able to write sentences that could be understood more easily despite their limited ideas. In the pre-test, they could only write meaningless chunks.

In general, teachers found that all students benefited from their planned actions but the strong and the average students showed a greater improvement in their writing.

To improve students' English standards, teachers have played an important role apart from teaching them the skills and strategies. One of the ways is to show students that they could improve with time and efforts. Based on the evaluation survey findings, 79% of students believed that a person's success depended a lot on efforts, not just intelligence. They also learned that if they kept practising without giving up, they would improve. The results were encouraging because obviously it was the dedicated efforts of teachers that helped change students' fixed mindset to a growth mindset. When these students believed that they could improve with efforts, they put in more efforts to reach their goals.

Impact on teachers

Apart from learning how to teach perseverance and vocabulary, teachers have become more assessment literate. It means that they know how to use the right assessment tool to assess students' learning. For example, teachers would use Kahoot! to test vocabulary knowledge and use the report to find out the problematic words for reteaching. Again, they would use students' writing samples to assess if the target words were used properly. They also know without clear assessment criteria, students would not understand teachers' expectations of the tasks. Teachers therefore spelt out the assessment criteria for the writing task before letting students write. Finally, teachers also analysed different students' writing and gave feedback that helped the class understand how they could write better.

Facilitating factors

1. Teachers' positive attitude towards integrating technology into their lessons

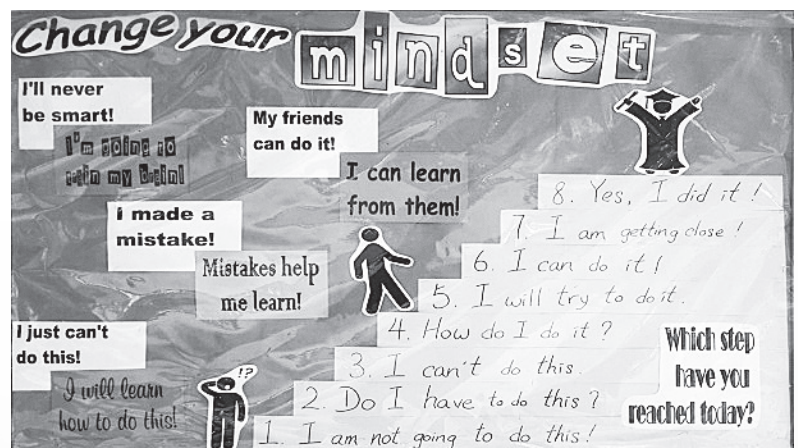
Though teachers are not computer experts, still they spent much time on learning the features of the tool and understanding how these tools could facilitate them to give timely feedback in class.

2. Fostering a “growth mindset” essential for cultivating perseverance among students

Teachers' beliefs also play an important role in the project. If teachers themselves did not believe their students could improve, students would give up easily. One teacher in this project was the class teacher as well. She spent time encouraging students to work towards their goals step by step. Both teachers gave a lot of encouragement and rewards to their classes so as to let students know that they might not reach the goal now, but with efforts, time and strategies, they would improve.

Conclusion

Assessment provides valuable data to different stakeholders, including teachers, parents and students. Yet, mere possession of a wealth of data would not lead to improvement in learning and teaching. Teachers need to make good use of the data to understand the underlying problems. As found in this school case, students' problems with English learning did not just lie on their weak foundation and inadequate family support, their mindset and perseverance were also important determinants of their learning attitude and performance. Hence, in formulating the coping strategies, teachers attended to the developmental needs of both personal values and language skills among students. The positive outcomes reported in the above section reinforce the integral conception of learning, teaching and assessment.



A board display to remind students of the growth mindset

References

- Fink, J. W. (2013). True grit. *Instructor*, 122(4), 26-31.
- Guskey, T. R. (2003). How classroom assessments improve learning. *Educational Leadership*, 60(5), 6-11.
- Rogler, D. (2014). Assessment literacy: building a base for better teaching and learning. *English Teaching Forum*, 52(3), 2-13.

Hing Tak School
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Enhancing assessment literacy in primary schools through the English Language Education Key Learning Area

Background

With regular review of both internal and external assessment data, teachers of Holy Family Canossian School (Kowloon Tong) found that making improvement in writing would be their top priority as they found the writing results were generally weaker as compared to those of other language skills. Teachers realised that they tended to focus too much on the planning and teaching of the writing tasks. As a result, the assessment part had not been planned thoroughly. Teachers also discovered that students did not spend much time on reviewing their strengths and weaknesses in writing as a whole. In order to stretch the potential of the P6 students and help them become reflective learners so as to better prepare for their secondary studies, teachers felt the need of improving the teaching of writing and promoting assessment literacy in school. Hence, a collaborative research and development project was conducted in P6 to explore relevant issues related to writing and assessment.

Level

P6

Strategies used

In the project, teachers focused on refining the design of existing writing tasks and providing better scaffolding of students' learning so as to give them sufficient input and support for writing different text types. Intensive planning was done on each writing task and all the tasks were made meaningful and purposeful for students. The school also strategically adopted different types of assessment to promote assessment for learning and assessment as learning, aiming at helping students better monitor their own learning progress. The following are the strategies experimented in the project:

1. promoting assessment as learning through the development of writing portfolio
2. motivating students to become self-directed learners and making improvement in writing
3. promoting assessment for learning through conducting writing conferences with students
4. mobilising support from parents to give feedback on students' learning

What happened

The project is comprised of three stages: planning, implementation and evaluation.

Stage one: Planning

1. Make effective use of various sources of data for identifying students' strengths and weaknesses in writing

- Analysed data collected from a range of assessment tools/activities, including the Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA), to identify students' needs and set subject goals
- Administered a pre-test to identify students' strengths and weaknesses in writing and designed writing tasks to address students' specific writing difficulties

Time allowed: 25 mins

P.6 Writing (Pre-/Post-test)

Name: _____ () Class: _____
Date: _____

You are John. Your pen friend, Chris, lives in the USA and he is very interested to know more about Chinese New Year. Write an email to tell him more about the festival. Use the following mind map to help you. Write about 80 words. You may use the following ideas for your email.

(Adapted from TSA 2014 6ERW3)

➔

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p style="text-align: center; background-color: #333; color: white; padding: 5px;">Lots of mistakes on the use of tenses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - wash away the bad luck - red packets - buy new clothes - reunion dinner - fireworks - flower market - receive red packets - turnip cake 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students got 1 to 1.58 out of 3 in language in general. Half of the students could get 2 out of 3 while the rest fell into the score 1 group. The average students got a pass in language and the lower ability group got an average of 1.25. Language is still the most difficult area for students. 50-75% of students got 1 in language.
<p style="text-align: center; background-color: #333; color: white; padding: 5px;">Lots of punctuation mistakes</p> <p>while 8% got the maximum score of 3. They could use the right tense consistently and there was a variety in their choice of vocabulary.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students basically had a good understanding of having to use simple present tense to write. However, they sometimes switched to use simple past or future tense. The use of tense was not consistent in some writing, especially the medium and the lower ability group. One student even wrote the e-mail as a recount and it showed that she did not even understand the writing topic. More focus can be put into the use of tense in the peer editing stage.
<p style="text-align: center; background-color: #333; color: white; padding: 5px;">Incorrect use of connectives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students made quite a lot of mistakes on punctuation. They did not use capital letters for some proper nouns like names of places. (e.g. Tsing Sha Tsui, Chinese New Year, Hello, How are you? Are you Happy in... In CNY, My family...) The weaker group made a lot of mistakes on punctuation.
<p style="text-align: center; background-color: #333; color: white; padding: 5px;">Lack relevant text features</p> <p>How are you? I know you are interested in CNY. I would like to share how my family celebrates it every year.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some students misused the connectives for writing the CNY events. They used 'first', 'next', 'then', 'after that', 'finally' as if they were writing a sequence of events which did not fit with the context of this writing. • The lower ability group was still weak in organization. There was still half of them getting 0-1 in organization. Some did not have the knowledge on text features and that made some text features of the e-mail missing.

2. Make improvement in the writing curriculum

i. Expose students to a variety of text types and promote self-directed learning

Students had to write a variety of text types throughout the year and each writing task was made meaningful and purposeful so that students could share their personal experience and feelings. The content of the writing tasks also matched with the themes of the General English units so that students could put the target language items learned into use. The following shows the curriculum planning for the first term:

6A textbook

Units	Themes	Tasks	Text types covered
1	"When I Grow Up"	Write an article for the school magazine to share with your fellow students what you want to be when you grow up and how you would prepare for your future career	School magazine article
3	"Fascinating Films"	Write a film review to promote a film that you like	Film review

5-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Problems in Our World” “How Can We Help?” 	Make a poster to promote how to help our world	Poster
7-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Special Times of the Year” “Happy New Year!” 	Write about a festival for tourists in a guide book to suggest what tourists can do in Hong Kong during this festival and give them some travel tips so that their trip can be more enjoyable	Tourist guide book page

ii. Help students become reflective learners through engaging them in different modes of writing assessment

Teachers adopted a variety of assessment modes in the writing project including self-, peer, teacher and parent assessments so as to enhance students’ ability to assess their own work instead of simply relying on their teachers’ feedback.

Assessment forms

(i) **Teacher’s feedback**
Read your teacher’s feedback carefully.

Content 40%	Language 40%	Organisation 10%	Creativity 10%	Total 100%

Comments: _____

Teacher assessment

(ii) **Self-assessment form**
Read your own writing. Put a tick in the box ☺ if you can find this part.

In the article, I ...	☺
1. described the appearance, movement, habitat, food and daily activities of my created animal.	
2. used different sentence patterns to describe the appearance of the animal.	
3. wrote about the threats that the animal is facing and how people should protect them.	
4. used connectives to express conditions and show results.	
5. spelt the words correctly.	
6. used present tense to write the article.	
7. wrote in paragraphs.	

Self-assessment

(iii) **Peer assessment form**
Read the work of one of your classmates and fill in the table below. Tick your choices.

☺ Strongly agree 😊 Agree ☹ Strongly disagree

In the article, she ...	☺	😊	☹
1. described the appearance, movement, habitat, food and daily activities of my created animal.			
2. used different sentence patterns to describe the appearance of the animal.			
3. wrote about the threats that the animal is facing and how people should protect them.			
4. used connectives to express conditions and show results.			
5. spelt the words correctly.			
6. used present tense to write the article.			
7. wrote in paragraphs.			

Name of classmate: _____

Peer assessment

Student’s name: _____ Date: _____

Dear Parents,
Your child’s writing portfolio includes all the writing tasks she did over the past few months. The purpose of this portfolio is to document how your child’s ability to communicate for a variety of purposes has developed over the past few months. The portfolio also gives your child an opportunity to select, evaluate, and reflect on her own progress. This will hopefully enable her to set goals for improving writing skills and see more clearly how much has been accomplished.

I encourage you to spend some time with your child as she shares this new adventure with you. I am sure you will enjoy every moment of the trip!

I would greatly appreciate feedback from you and would find your responses to the following questions extremely helpful. Thank you for your support.

Yours sincerely,
P5 English teachers

1. After viewing the portfolio, I found evidence of growth in the following areas:
(Please ✓ the right item(s))

A. Expression of ideas _____
B. Organization of writing ideas _____
C. Focus (staying on topic) _____
D. Spelling accuracy _____
E. Punctuation use (commas, capitals, periods, etc.) _____
F. Ability to revise her work _____

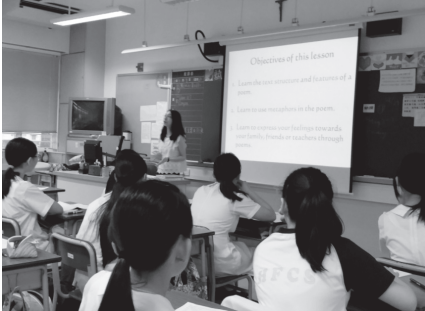
2. I feel my child has shown the greatest growth in the following area:

Parent assessment

Stage two: Implementation

In teaching each writing task, teacher thought about the input students needed for accomplishing the task. All the tasks guided students to write with a step-by-step approach. Meaningful homework was designed at the end of each writing task so that students could continue to learn more about the writing topic. The following is an example of how a writing task was taught and what assessment elements were infused.

Task: Write a poem with metaphors expressing gratefulness to a friend, teacher or family member.

Steps	Activities/Tasks	Purposes
1	<p>Introducing learning objectives to students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to learn the text structure and features of a poem to use metaphors in a poem to write in four stanzas/verses to express feelings towards friends/family members/teachers through poems 	<p>To raise students' awareness of what the learning objectives are so that they can gradually set their own learning goals based on assessment results and their own reflection</p>
2	<p>Engaging students in a pre-writing self-directed learning task</p> <p>Students had to browse a website to learn some basic information about poetry in the self-directed learning task. They had to share in class what they had learned from the website.</p>	<p>To empower students to learn independently and engage them in assessment as learning so that they would think about what they have learned, what they are going to learn more and how they can learn more effectively</p>

3

Scaffolding the writing process

i. Introducing the text type, text features and function of a poem

<p>A Thankful Heart I am thankful for ... A ll my clothes and toys ... M y mom, dad, and brothers ... T rue friends ... H ome and health ... A back yard to run and play ... N ana and Papa ... K nowing God loves me ... F ood on our table ... U ncles, aunts, and cousins ... L iving in a free country.</p>	<p>1. Think of reasons why we should be thankful to the items in bold.</p> <table border="1"><thead><tr><th>things we should be thankful</th><th>reasons</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>e.g. Clothes and toys</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Mom, dad, brothers</td><td></td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td></tr></tbody></table>	things we should be thankful	reasons	e.g. Clothes and toys		Mom, dad, brothers																	
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To facilitate assessment for learning as teachers can monitor students' learning progress more easily with better scaffolding of the lesson and provide timely feedback to students

ii. Analysing a sample poem with students (modelling)

iii. Teaching text structure and features of the text type
Students were taught the use of the poetic features of similes and metaphors and the differences between a passage and a poem.



- iv. Providing input on vocabulary and writing the lines
Students were asked to think of images to describe a friend, e.g. a rainbow, a cake, a candle or a flower. Then, they wrote about the image and their feelings for a good friend with the use of similes or metaphors.
- v. Students practised writing a stanza in pairs and then wrote the rest of their poems independently. They assessed their own work through conducting self-evaluation.



4

Assigning meaningful homework to:

- consolidate students' learning of the writing topic
- promote reading
- link homework to everyday life experience
- develop students' creativity

To make use of materials from the Student Assessment Repository (STAR) and other relevant learning resources to design homework so as to sustain students' interest in learning and enrich their knowledge on the writing topic through doing self-directed learning tasks

II. Types of poems

a. Read the following definitions about different types of poems. Match the definitions with the poems. Write the letter in the bracket.

- A. A **cinquain poem** is a **verse** of five lines that do not **rhyme**.
- B. An **acrostic poem** is a poem in which the first letter of each line, read vertically, spells out a word or a message.
- C. A **free verse** is poetry that does not use any patterns, **rhyme**, or any other musical pattern.

Sad farewells are given to those people
Who are extremely prized and special
Dear teacher, you are one such person
The reason school is so much fun
We will miss all our classes with you
We hope you will miss us too

FAREWELL

1. ()

Moves very fast
Often laughing
Rides his bike with me
Great curly hair
Always kind to others
Never makes you feel bad
Fun to play with
Likes going to the zoo and I do too
Lou are a good friend Morgan
You are a good friend Morgan
Now that's what I know about you.

2. ()

Amelia
Silly Girl
Always Makes Mistakes
Loves To Bake Pies
Maid

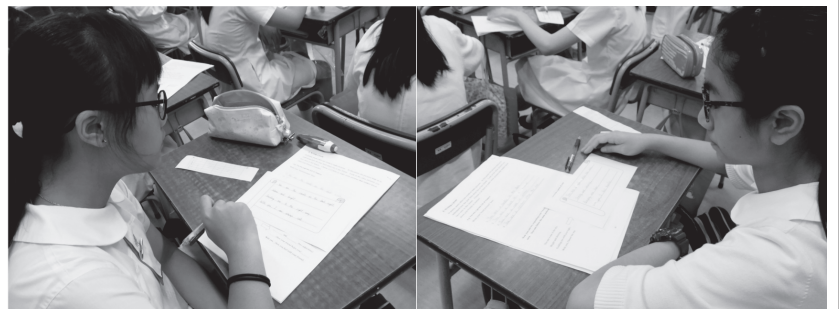
3. ()

Stage three: Evaluation

1. Different modes of assessment administered on completion of different writing tasks to promote assessment for learning

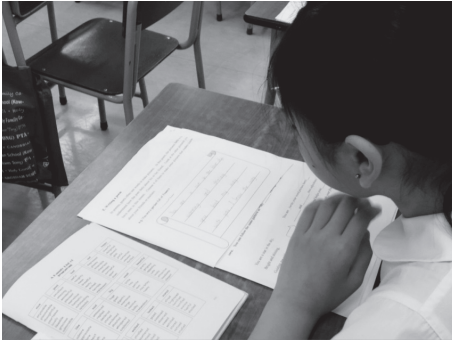
Peer assessment

Students discussed the writing among themselves and did peer assessment on each other's work based on assessment rubrics given.



Self-assessment

Students assessed their own work based on the rubrics in the self-assessment form.



(ii) Self-assessment form

Read your own poem. Put a tick in the box if you can find this part.

In the poem, I ...	☺
1. chose 4 words to make pictures.	
2. used adjectives to describe my _____.	
3. described how my _____ helps me.	
4. described how I felt with my _____.	
5. spelt the words correctly.	
6. wrote in verses.	

Teacher assessment

Teacher gave quality feedback to students to promote assessment for learning.

- (i) Teacher used marking codes in marking students' writing to help them understand mistakes and engage them in self-correction.

Marking Code	
Symbol	Meaning
t.	tense
sp.	spelling
p.	punctuation
prep.	preposition
^	missing word
art.	article
//	new paragraph
?	unclear
pron.	pronoun
v.	verb
pl.	plural
s.	singular
adj.	adjective
adv.	adverb
w.w.	wrong use of word

- (ii) Precise and constructive feedback was given to students to give them clear directions on what to improve in their writing.

Teacher's feedback

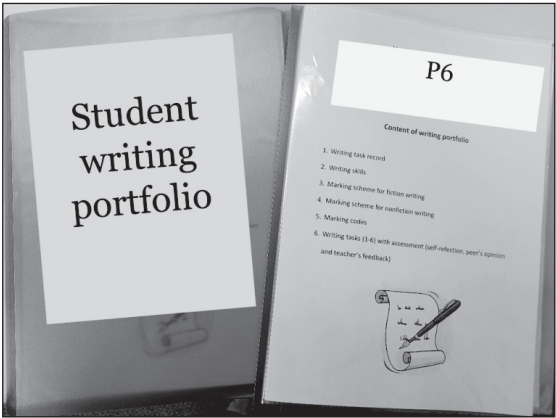
Read your teacher's feedback carefully.

Content 40%	Language 40%	Organisation 10%	Format 10%	Total 100%
36	33	8	9	86

Comments: Try to use other words to replace Dory in the second paragraph so that your writing will ^{not} sound so repetitive. On the whole a nice film review.

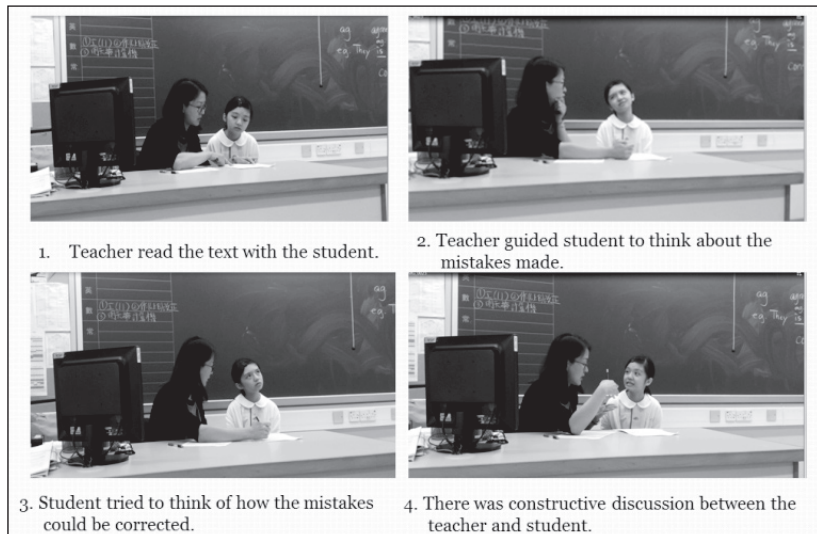
	<p>(iii) Teacher did detailed analysis of students' writing and generated qualitative data to conclude students' performance in each task. The analysis was then shared with students to make them more aware of the mistakes they made, which should be avoided in the next task.</p> <p>Topic: My dream job</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="730 499 1484 999"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="730 499 882 539"></th> <th data-bbox="882 499 1484 539">Content</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="730 539 882 757">Strengths</td> <td data-bbox="882 539 1484 757"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Students could write about their dream job with relevant reasons to justify why they like the job. Students were able to write the reasons with elaborations. ✓ Students were serious about this writing task as they did think about the job they want seriously and how it can contribute to the society. </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="730 757 882 999">Weaknesses</td> <td data-bbox="882 757 1484 999"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Not all students were clear about what to write in each paragraph. Thus, clearer guidance on the main ideas of each paragraph has to be given. ✗ More problems were found in paragraphs 3-4. Some irrelevant ideas were found in paragraph 4 as students could not differentiate what to write in these paragraphs. </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Content	Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Students could write about their dream job with relevant reasons to justify why they like the job. Students were able to write the reasons with elaborations. ✓ Students were serious about this writing task as they did think about the job they want seriously and how it can contribute to the society. 	Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Not all students were clear about what to write in each paragraph. Thus, clearer guidance on the main ideas of each paragraph has to be given. ✗ More problems were found in paragraphs 3-4. Some irrelevant ideas were found in paragraph 4 as students could not differentiate what to write in these paragraphs.
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2. Engaging students in ongoing review of their writing progress and promoting assessment as learning through different means

<p>Developing writing portfolios</p> <p>Students kept a systematic collection of all their writing tasks, writing skills sheets, marking schemes and assessment record sheets in their writing portfolios and they had to do regular review of their work. This helped establish their roles and responsibilities in relation to their own learning.</p>																					
<p>Setting learning goals for the next writing task</p> <p>Students selected some pieces of writing from the writing portfolio and completed the self-assessment form to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses in writing so that they were able to set learning goals for the upcoming writing tasks.</p>	<table border="1" data-bbox="791 1603 1348 2092"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2" data-bbox="791 1603 1348 1659">My writing progress – Self assessment Writing (1)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td colspan="2" data-bbox="791 1659 1348 1688">Date</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2" data-bbox="791 1688 1348 1718">Topic:</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2" data-bbox="791 1718 1348 1747">Scores: Content () Language () Organization ()</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="791 1747 991 1792">What I did well:</td> <td data-bbox="991 1747 1348 1792"></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="791 1792 991 1848">What I need to improve:</td> <td data-bbox="991 1792 1348 1848"></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="791 1848 991 1892">Writing conference with teacher:</td> <td data-bbox="991 1848 1348 1892">Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="791 1892 991 1960">Suggestions from teacher:</td> <td data-bbox="991 1892 1348 1960"></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="791 1960 991 2027">My goal:</td> <td data-bbox="991 1960 1348 2027"></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="791 2027 991 2092">My actions:</td> <td data-bbox="991 2027 1348 2092"></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	My writing progress – Self assessment Writing (1)		Date		Topic:		Scores: Content () Language () Organization ()		What I did well:		What I need to improve:		Writing conference with teacher:	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Suggestions from teacher:		My goal:		My actions:	
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My goal:																					
My actions:																					

Conducting writing conferences with students

Teachers offered students more personal attention and individual help for tackling problems encountered in writing and discussed with them areas for improvement. Teachers also guided students to evaluate their own performance against the learning goals set so as to make further progress.



1. Teacher read the text with the student.

2. Teacher guided student to think about the mistakes made.

3. Student tried to think of how the mistakes could be corrected.

4. There was constructive discussion between the teacher and student.

Teacher-student interaction in a writing conference

Engaging parents in giving feedback on students' writing

Parents reviewed students' writing portfolio to identify students' strengths and weaknesses in writing. They gave both teachers and students suggestions for improvement which could benefit the learning and teaching process.

1. After viewing the portfolio, I found evidence of growth in the following areas:
(Please ✓ the right item(s))

- A. Expression of ideas _____
- B. Organization of writing ideas _____
- C. Focus (staying on topic) _____
- C. Vocabulary/language development _____
- D. Spelling accuracy _____
- E. Punctuation use (commas, capitals, periods, etc.) _____
- F. Ability to revise her work _____

2. I feel my child has shown the greatest growth in the following area:

Impact

Student development

- Improvement could be found in students' mastery of writing skills. Comparing the writing pre-test and post-test results, it could be found that students have made improvement in content and elaboration of ideas. More than 70% of the students were able to obtain 3 or 4 marks out of 5 in content. The percentage of students obtaining 1 or 2 marks dropped from 42% to 27%, proving that the majority of students could write about the topic with richer content. Students were familiar with the topic and could easily express personal experience about the topic. In addition, 70% of the students could score 2 or 3 marks out of 3 for language and almost 70% of them received 3 or 4 marks out of 4 for organisation. They could sequence their ideas better and write in logical paragraphs as well as use a variety of connectives to link ideas.
- Self-directed learning was promoted. Students took a more active role in their learning. They were more aware of what they had to learn and how they could learn more effectively. They learned to review their

own learning progress and set achievable goals for the next stage of learning. Thus, assessment as learning was achieved.

Writing (2)	
Date:	2 nd December, 2016
Topic:	Film Review - Zootopia
Scores:	Content (31) Language (32) Organization (7)
What I did well:	Use different adjectives to give comments.
What I need to improve:	My spelling need to improve.
Writing conference with teacher:	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Suggestions from teacher:	I can write more clearly about the strengths and weaknesses of the film.
Corrections done:	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Re-corrections needed?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
My goal:	I need to spell more words and improve my weakness.
My actions:	Read more books.

What I did well

What I need to improve

My goal

My actions

My writing progress - Self-assessment

- Students have become more reflective in their work through engaging in self-assessment, peer assessment and writing conferences. They were more capable of correcting their own writing mistakes with the help of marking codes used by teachers and writing conferences done with teachers. Students' regular review of their own writing portfolio enabled them to revisit what they have learned and what their strengths and weaknesses were in writing which could together inform their next stage of learning.

they discover an ice island. There ^(v.t) have some dragon trappers live there and their master, Drago wants to

↓

Corrections

1. There are some dragon trappers live there and their master, Drago wants to kill all of the dragons!

Students were able to correct their mistakes by making reference to the marking codes.

Teacher development

- Teachers have become more confident in setting subject goals and teaching objectives, monitoring implementation and evaluating effectiveness based on different sources of assessment data. They no longer only aimed at helping students achieve the Basic Competencies, but developing students' writing skills according to their progress.
- Teachers were more capable of providing quality feedback to students to help them make targeted improvement. They were also able to provide more opportunities for students to conduct peer assessment in the writing lessons and facilitate more student-student interaction to promote assessment for learning.
- Teachers have become more aware of setting meaningful homework with a greater variety so as to match the intended learning and teaching objectives and to cater for learner diversity.



Curriculum development

- There was a greater variety of assessment modes such as parent assessment, peer assessment, writing conferences and writing portfolios in addition to written tests and examinations. Improvement could also be found in the design of test and examination papers as the validity of items set in the papers was enhanced to assess what have been taught more effectively.
- There was better alignment made among learning, teaching and assessment.
- There was effective use of data (e.g. pre-/post-test results, test/examination results, homework, students' learning record) in the school to inform learning and teaching. Detailed data analysis of learning evidence enabled teachers to identify their students' strengths and weaknesses and to inform curriculum planning.
- Homework given to students was of greater variety and the design was well aligned with the learning and teaching objectives.

Assessment literacy development in school

- Teachers' competence in using data at different stages of the EPIE (Evaluation-Planning-Implementation-Evaluation) cycle was raised. They made use of TSA data, pre-test and post-test data, students' performance in formative assessment, examination results, student work, homework, etc., at different times of the year for identifying students' learning needs to inform planning. Strategies worked out for making improvement in the targeted areas were all evidence-based and targeted at specific areas for improvement.
- Teachers moved beyond the narrow focus on Basic Competencies and put emphasis on holistic school-based curriculum planning so as to help students achieve more balanced development of the knowledge, skills and values and attitudes set out in the English Language Education Key Learning Area Curriculum Guide.
- Teachers incorporated scaffolding strategies into the input-output process so as to help students with diverse needs to manage more complex and integrated tasks in a progressive manner. There was also improvement made in the design of formative tasks and examination papers to make sure there was alignment among learning, teaching and assessment.

- Teachers' repertoire of assessment methods was widened, enabling students to display different facets of learning. The use of a range of formative assessment methods enabled teachers and students to understand their learning progress and to give timely and appropriate feedback. Students were engaged in self-assessment and writing conferences to help them understand their strengths and weaknesses in writing so as to set goals for the next stage of learning. They were also guided to develop writing portfolios so that they could closely monitor their own progress of learning. The use of objective-specific rubrics for self-, peer and teacher assessments could help students understand what they were expected to learn and which areas they needed to improve. The use of marking codes as a form of feedback enabled students to review and reflect on the mistakes made and correct them instead of simply referring to grades/marks. Students' common problems were summarised for discussion in class, and conducting individual writing conferences with students helped keep them motivated.

Facilitating factors

- There was a common goal of improving assessment literacy in the school and all the teachers worked hard towards the shared mission.
- Teachers were willing to administer different modes of assessment. They were willing to spend time on conducting writing conferences with students to give them personal attention, and the feedback given to students facilitated assessment as learning.

Difficulties and suggestions

- It took much time to make arrangements for conducting writing conferences and peer assessment, as well as analysing different sources of data. Thus, teachers needed to be empowered through providing them with awareness-raising and professional training activities.
- In order to be able to infuse different modes of assessment into the curriculum, holistic curriculum planning needs to be done well in advance to allow sufficient time for teachers' knowledge on assessment literacy to be enhanced.

Way forward

1. The school has experienced a good start in promoting assessment literacy. Such progress made should be sustained through ongoing holistic curriculum planning and teacher development.
2. Parent assessment is a good source of feedback and support for both student learning and curriculum development. More could be explored on parents' involvement in the assessment process to engage family support in learning.
3. Promoting assessment as learning by using portfolios and conducting individual conferences with students are good practices as these enable teachers to give their students timely feedback and personal attention. Students can also be engaged in more self-reflection to set further learning goals. These practices should be sustained to facilitate the ongoing development for students to become lifelong learners.

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Holy Family Canossian School (Kowloon Tong)
Amy FAN (Language Support Officer)

Empowering students to become independent and reflective writers

Background

Over the years, English teachers of C & MA Chui Chak Lam Memorial School (CCLMS) have put great efforts into improving their senior primary students' writing to help them attain a smoother transition to secondary education. Ample support, in the form of guiding questions, pictorial/word prompts, vocabulary and useful expressions, was given to help them complete the writing tasks. With such support, most students were able to write with appropriate ideas and express them intelligibly. Building on these achievements, teachers would like to stretch the students further to meet their more advanced learning needs. In particular, teachers explored how to build up students' capability to write independently when teachers' support is gradually reduced, and how to integrate the development of thinking skills with the language skills if students are expected to write systematically and creatively. The teachers decided to enrich their school-based writing curriculum by incorporating independent learning, reflective learning and assessment as learning elements in each unit.

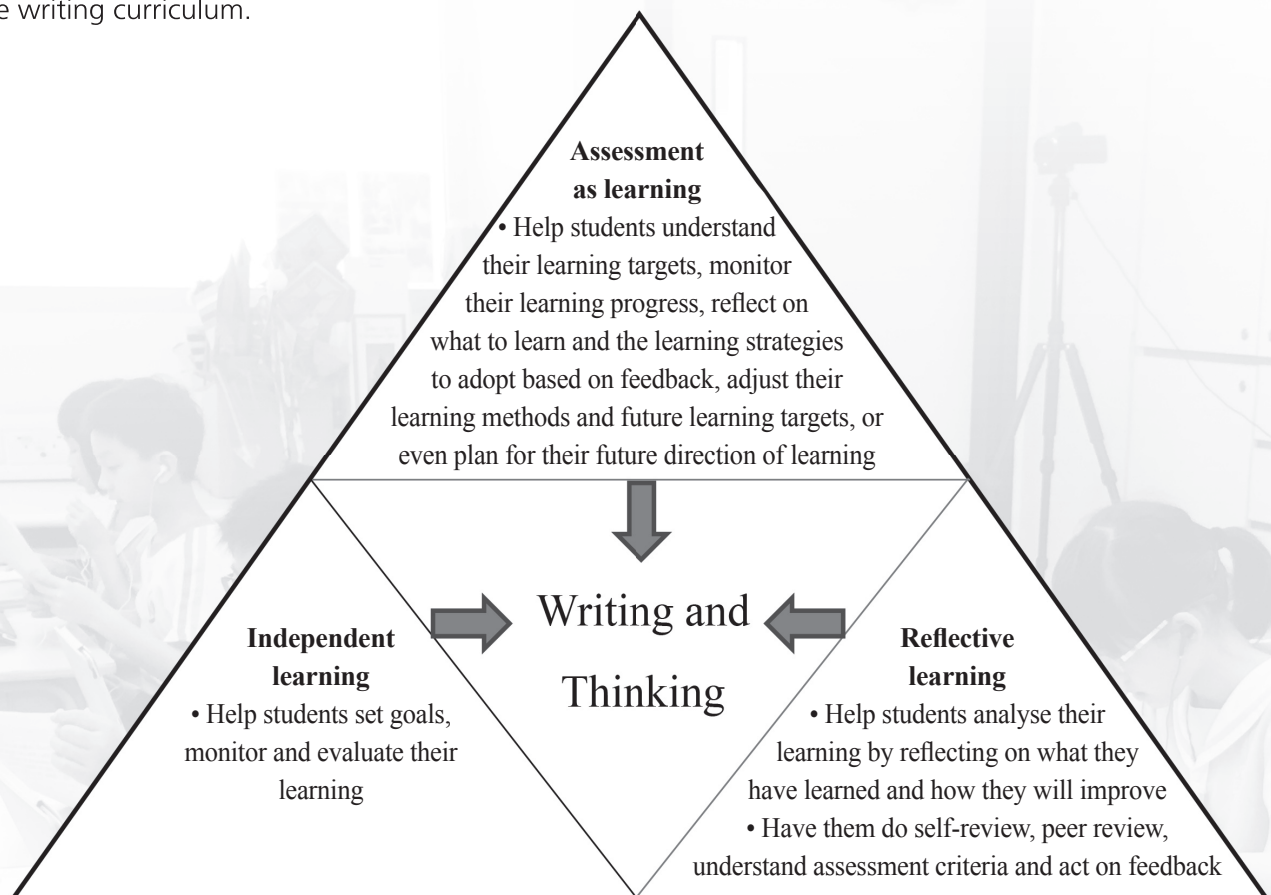
Level

P5

Strategies used

1. Adopting a holistic approach

To develop students' thinking and writing skills in an integrated manner, teachers of CCLMS adopted a holistic approach to implementing independent learning, reflective learning and assessment as learning into the writing curriculum.



The team worked out a framework which incorporated the setting of learning goals, monitoring the learning progress, evaluating the learning outcomes, reflecting on the learning process based on feedback received and adjusting the learning strategies and fine-tuning further learning targets.

A framework for writing unit plan was worked out to incorporate the above elements. Teachers can base on what they do in the writing lessons to check and write down notes in the grids provided.

Flow of the writing lessons	Objectives	Items Incorporated into the writing curriculum		
		Independent learning	Reflective learning	Assessment as learning
Introduce the writing task	Enable students to know the context, purpose and audience of the writing piece	✓		✓
		Understanding and setting of learning goals		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recall what students have learned in the textbook unit which can be used as input for writing Assign students pre-tasks, some of which are done as work at home and some done in class 	Establish the link between reading and language practice with writing Provide students with practice on language and ideas on content in the form of self-directed learning		✓	
		Reflecting on the learning progress		
Allow students time to do the drafting, then provide on-the-spot feedback to their work	Enable students to put what they have learned into application and enable the teacher to monitor their work	✓		
		Monitoring the learning progress by the teacher		
Encourage students to use the self-checking list before handing in their work	Empower students with learner independence and sharpen their self-awareness in learning	✓	✓	✓
		Monitoring the learning progress by the student		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invite students to share their writing in class Mark students' work to know what they can and cannot do 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide students with a chance to learn from one another Enable teachers to know students' strengths and weaknesses 		✓	✓
		Evaluating the learning outcomes Adjusting the learning strategies and fine-tuning further learning targets		

2. Reviewing and improving existing writing tasks plus designing new writing tasks to reflect the new approach to writing instruction

Teachers made different attempts to realise the incorporation of independent learning, reflective learning and assessment as learning into the writing curriculum. On the one hand, one of the writing tasks designed in the previous year was analysed and improved with pre-tasks infused to develop students' thinking

skills. On the other hand, teachers designed a new writing task based on a textbook unit so as to infuse the features of independent learning, reflective learning and assessment as learning. Thinking tools, like “Problem, Result and Solution” and “Paragraph Burger”, were introduced to help students develop organisational skills systematically.

3. Monitoring the implementation of the improved writing tasks through lesson observation

The writing tasks were trialled in lessons which were observed by teachers involved in the project. The effectiveness of the materials designed as well as relevant pedagogical practices were evaluated and discussed among the teachers for further improvement and professional development.

4. Providing other English teachers with professional development opportunities through sharing of good practices

Teachers involved in the project had the opportunity to share with teachers of other levels on the new approach of unit planning and writing adopted. They were encouraged to make effective use of such data as observation, student work and reflections in the course of their sharing. Participating teachers were invited to share their views on the units implemented as well as thoughts on extending the approach to other levels for vertical and horizontal planning of the writing curriculum in the following school year.

What happened

The English teachers decided to modify one existing writing task and design a completely new one, and the following elements were incorporated into both tasks:

1. Thinking tools for students
2. Elements of **independent learning**, **reflective learning** and **assessment as learning** in the writing tasks

Writing task one: Modifying an existing task

Original task requirement: Write a diary of some naughty things you did in one day.

Problems identified:

1. Not every student might have done naughty things, and they would need to create an imaginary scenario to fulfill the requirements of the writing task. This might have reduced the authenticity of the context.
2. The planner of the task provided required students to respond to guiding questions rather than generate their own ideas. This might have limited students' input and creativity.

Modified writing task one

Revised task requirement:

You are Sam. Write a diary entry about what you saw on a Sunday afternoon. Write on at least two of the following events. Talk about the **problem**, **result** and **solution** of the chosen event.

- Students were given clearer instructions and prompts to choose from.

Tasks/Steps

Self-directed learning/ Assessment as learning features

Pre-writing input

Pre-task one: Identifying text features

This diary entry is written by Mary. Read it and match the correct letters in the boxes.

A. Weather	B. Day of the week	C. Ending
D. Introduction	E. Date	F. Main part
G. Put ideas in order	H. Start with a comment about the day	I. Write what the writer has learnt in the day

1. (B) 2. (E) 3. (A)

Friday 12th September Sunny

4. (D) What a bad day! I was mad with my little brother Kenny. It was his turn to do the washing up but he didn't help with it. He was lazy so I had to do the washing up instead.

5. (H)

6. (F) This afternoon, I didn't talk to Kenny when we went to the park. I walked along behind him quietly. However, when we heard a dog bark loudly, Kenny cried and climbed up a tree quickly. I stood under the tree and laughed at him. I knew I was unkind. I even shouted at Kenny rudely but he could not get down easily. He was stuck in the tree for an hour. I did nothing as I thought I could not help. I started feeling very worried. Fortunately, the park keeper called the firemen for help immediately.

7. (G)

8. (C) I was really sorry. I should be kind to Kenny and we should get on with each other. I should not laugh at him. I should be nice to him. I also should not shout at him. I should love him as much as I can because he is my only brother.

9. (I)

Students were taught the text type of a diary entry before. By asking them to identify the features, teachers could check how well students have mastered this text feature. It also enabled students to know if they had to revisit and consolidate what they learned before.

Pre-task two: Identifying language features

A) Read Part 1 of Kenny's diary entry and circle all the verbs below.

Part 1

Friday 12th September hot

It was really a terrible day! My sister and I went to the park. We did not walk together because we had a quarrel. Suddenly, the dog barked to make a loud noise. I cried and climbed up a tree quickly. My sister stood under the tree and laughed at me. What should I do? Poor me! I was afraid of the dogs and could not get down the tree easily. I was stuck in the tree for nearly an hour!

What is the tense used? _____

B) Read Part 2 of Kenny's diary entry and circle the correct forms of the verbs.

Part 2

I (1) (waits / waited / waiting) patiently. My sister did not (2) (help / helps / helped) me at all. Luckily, the park keeper called the firemen for help immediately. They (3) (comes / come / came) with their long ladder to (4) (brings / brought / bring) me down carefully. I was safe.

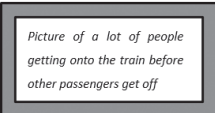
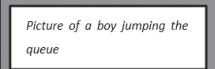
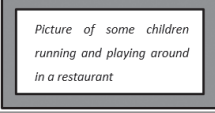
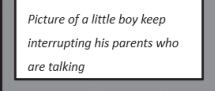
I felt helpless today. I should not (5) (is / am / be) lazy. I should help my sister with the washing up. I should (6) (get / got / gets) on with her and we should not quarrel with each other because she (7) (be / is / are) my only sister.

Why are infinitives used for ...

No. 2? _____ No. 4? _____ No. 6? _____

Instead of mechanical drills in the original task, students were required to point out the tense used after circling the verbs in Part One and to recall the various contexts for bare infinitives in Part Two. This inductive approach to grammar input consolidated their learning through summarising and reflecting on their existing knowledge, which in turn enhanced the development of higher-order thinking skills.

Pre-task three: Group discussions to generate ideas

At the MTR platform <i>(get onto the train before other passengers get off)</i>		<input type="checkbox"/>	Jot down ideas on: • Problem • Result • Solution
At the bus stop <i>(not lining up, jump the queue)</i>		<input type="checkbox"/>	Jot down ideas on: • Problem • Result • Solution
At the restaurant <i>(run and play around)</i>		<input type="checkbox"/>	Jot down ideas on: • Problem • Result • Solution
At home <i>(interrupt when parents are talking)</i>		<input type="checkbox"/>	Jot down ideas on: • Problem • Result • Solution

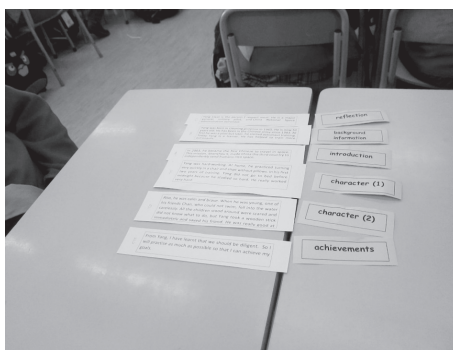
As collaboration among peers in non-competitive activities also enhances self-directed learning (SDL) (Foo & Hussain, 2010), students were given the opportunity to generate ideas collaboratively:

1. Students worked in groups to discuss the problem, result and solution of the assigned situation;
2. Each group reported and shared their ideas discussed;
3. Learner diversity was catered for through making choices available for students to write about and allowing flexibility in terms of the number of events to include.

The whole process of idea generation is more student-centred compared to the original task as it assumed students' greater responsibility in learning, including setting their own learning goals and making informed choices of learning resources/ strategies.

Writing task two: Designing a new task

New writing task two	
Task requirement: Write about the person I admire most.	
Tasks/Steps	Self-directed learning/ Assessment as learning features
<p>Pre-task one: Providing students with writing support through scaffolding</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reading input based on an article about Yang Liwei, the first Chinese astronaut, adapted from the textbook <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Essential text features of a biography highlighted: Introduction, Background information, Achievements, Character and Reflection b. Jigsaw reading: Sequencing and matching 	<p>Through incorporating the explicit teaching of text features and group work, students were able to engage in meaningful discussion, provide support and feedback to each other and exchange viewpoints with justifications, thereby practising their thinking and language skills individually and collaboratively. Students were also provided with visual representations of writing skills to help consolidate their understanding.</p>

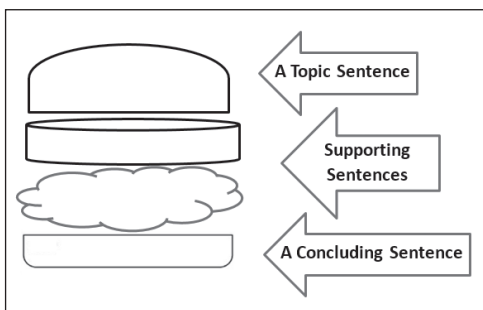


c. Guided analysis of paragraph content

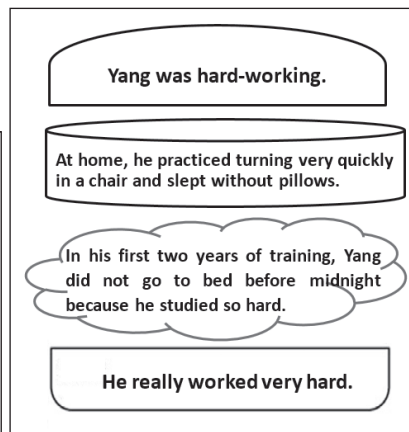
Part B: Analyse what details should be included in each paragraph.

Paragraph	Sub-detail
1. Introduction	
(a) <u>Yang Liwei</u> is the person I respect most.	(a) <u>name</u>
(b) He is a <u>major general</u> , <u>military pilot</u> , and China National Space administration <u>astronaut</u> .	(b) <u>job/profession</u>
2. Background information	
(c) Yang was born in <u>Liaoning province</u> in <u>1965</u> .	(c) <u>place of birth</u> <u>year of birth</u>
(d) He is now <u>51</u> years old.	(d) <u>age</u>
(e) He has been in the <u>Chinese army</u> since 1983. At first he was a <u>pilot</u> but later, he started <u>astronaut training</u> . Today Yang is a <u>trainer</u> . He has <u>helped</u> to train more astronauts.	(e) <u>life history</u>
3. Achievements	
(f) In 2003, he <u>became the first Chinese to travel in space</u> .	(f) <u>achievement</u>
(g) This mission, <u>Shenzhou 5</u> , made China the <u>third</u> country to independently <u>send humans into space</u> .	(g) <u>elaboration</u>

2. Support on organisation and elaboration by adopting the “Paragraph Burger” framework



The “Paragraph Burger” framework



An example

While-writing: Group writing activity

1. Each group was required to write about a teacher by adopting the “Paragraph Burger” framework.
2. Each group was required to present their ideas for the rest of the class to guess who the subject of the writing was.

Group interaction enhanced the depth and breadth of students’ ideas as they could suggest, question and modify ideas among themselves.

This person is caring. ← bread

When someone cries, that person will gently ask her what's the matter and solve the problem for her. ← vegetab

This person is funny too. ← meat

That person always tell some jogs in class to make the lesson less boring. ← cheese

This person is responsible. ← shrimp

That person takes the job seriously and take full responsibility. ← tomato

This person is kind too. ← fish

③ This person won't shout at us although we did something wrong. ← egg

This person is patient. ← THIS IS KETCHUP

When some people doesn't know how to do the homework, that always teaches them how to do it. ← THIS IS ONION

This person is a good role model for us. ← ?! bread

bad writing

J: This person is clever.

This person likes to answer question for the teachers. As I remember this person Z: in a lesson can answer 10 questions and all correct! ← children

This person very very likes to write and read. T: so this person had learn many words. And this person get a good result in the writing exam. ← disagree

J: This person really like to help people. ← park

One day, Aarya fell on to the floor because the floor was wet. Aarya cried painfully. This person immediately to help her. This person said "her help for".

④ Z: This person makes me learnt a lot. ← egg

J: This person always gave ours to learn a lot.

Post-writing: Self- and teacher evaluation

Students were provided with a checklist for self-editing and teacher evaluation at the beginning of the writing process as a reminder about the task requirements and to help evaluate their learning outcome.

The checklists available from the beginning of the writing process provided students with a clear reference of the learning goals of the task, and provided the teachers with a reference for feedback, promoting the development of self-directed learning and assessment as learning.

Self-evaluation		
Areas to look at	Put a tick ✓ in the box if you have included that part	Did you give elaborations on that part? How well did you do it? Rate yourself: 3, 2, 1, 0
Content		
1. Introduction		
2. Background information		
3. Achievements		
4. Characters		
5. Reflection		
Language		
	Put a tick ✓ in the box if you did	Rate yourself: 3, 2, 1, 0
1. Did you use different tenses (present tense, past tense, present perfect tense, future tense) correctly?		
2. Did you use a range of vocabulary (e.g. adjectives to describe the characters of the person you admire)?		
3. Did you spell the words correctly?		
4. Did you use punctuation marks and capitalizations correctly?		
Organization		
	Put a tick ✓ in the box if you did	Rate yourself: 3, 2, 1, 0
1. Did you organize the ideas in paragraphs?		
2. Are the ideas presented clearly and logically?		
On the whole, I felt I did:		
I did well.	I could do better.	I could not do it well.
I need to work hard on:		

Impact

Student level

Students have taken a more active role in learning, both within the classroom where they had more chances to work together and outside the classroom where they were assigned self-directed learning tasks. Once their interest in learning English is aroused and their fear of writing is overcome, their potentials are unleashed. They have become more capable of writing more with better collaboration, as reflected in the example shown below.

There are many people that I admire, but the person I admire the most is my mum.

My mum is called Jane. She was born on Lantau Island and she grew up in a village. She likes playing tennis and volleyball. She has been a P.E. and English teacher for many years. Also, she gave birth to me eleven years ago.

Over the years, she has taught many students who then become doctors, teachers, nurses, engineers, lawyers, IT programmers and actresses. Some of them become good friends with my mum. They sometimes have gathering or even play ball games together. Besides, she won a lot of medals in tennis and volleyball competitions. She is really tough. She tried to have more babies but failed. Finally she gave birth to me. So I feel I am a lucky girl. She is proud of her child who is very helpful.

My mum is caring. When I am sick, even though she is busy, she also takes care of me. When I make mistakes, she will not scold me angrily. She will teach me patiently. My mum is really kind.

My mum is versatile. She can sing, swim, play volleyball and tennis! She even teaches me how to sing and ride a bicycle. My mum is really talented.

From my mum, I have learnt that we should be kind to others and develop my potential. From now on, I will help anyone who needs help. I hope she will be happy and proud of me all the time.

The writing is well-structured with clear paragraphs providing:

- an introduction
- background information
- achievements
- a description of personality
- reflections

Use of adjectives acquired from self-directed learning tasks, e.g. “versatile”, “talented”

When talking about character, the student applied what was learned from the paragraph burger: a topic sentence at the beginning, supporting sentences with elaborations to give more details and a concluding sentence at the end.

Teacher level

Teachers sharpened their ability to analyse writing tasks and identify areas for improvement. They have become more willing to dig into and try out activities that can develop students' thinking skills through diversified learning modes such as group work, brainstorming, classifying, prioritising, inferring, predicting and evaluating. At the same time, they have become more willing to refrain themselves from providing too much support and guidance to students, allowing more space to develop students' creativity, responsibility and independence.

Curriculum level

The school-based writing curriculum has undergone a progressive modification which exhibits the following features:

- Choices in writing tasks were given to address the diverse needs of students
- An evaluation checklist was given for each writing to help students understand the learning objectives, reflect on their own performance and seek improvement.

Facilitating factors

1. A co-operative team of teachers who are open-minded and reflective (aware of the problems that students face and eager of finding solutions) means that they are willing to accept challenges and try out a lot of new ideas never tried out before. This was revealed in the teachers' willingness to replace or revise the writing tasks developed in the previous year. They were not complacent about their work and continuously looked for opportunities for further improvement in terms of material design and pedagogy.

For example, more time was required for the completion of each writing task as more support was rendered in the form of pre-writing tasks to students before they could produce the final product. Teachers recognised that the pre-writing tasks were important as they provided the essential building blocks to students in terms of language and content. Therefore, they are more than willing to put them into classroom practice despite the additional workload and time spent.

2. Support from and leadership of the panel head

In 2016/17, the English teachers experienced an academic year which included a number of major school events and commitments. To show her strong support, the English panel chair took up one P5 class to pioneer the new initiatives together with the other teachers. Apart from setting the development focus for the subject, i.e. re-designing the writing curriculum, the panel chair was directly involved in P5 in planning, designing, implementing and evaluating the new ideas or strategies adopted. The panel chair demonstrated her professional leadership through action rather than instruction which motivated other English teachers in the panel. She believed the collective wisdom and effort drawn together could bring about a more student-centred English Language curriculum in writing as well as empower them to become more confident and effective facilitators in the classroom.

Way forward

The tryout has generated very positive experience for both teachers and students. Helping students become independent and reflective learners will continue to be a development goal of the English subject. Specific areas for development may include:

- Enhancing teachers' confidence and competence in playing the role of a facilitator, e.g. further strengthening of their skills in conducting group work, giving students more autonomy in learning
- Strengthening the use of assessment data and feedback to help students set writing goals and review their own progress

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