Nurturing the love of writing:
Developing students into independent writers

Yan Tak Catholic Primary School

Background

- Students
  - have low motivation to write
  - are comparatively weak in writing, especially during assessments
  - copy answers for homework in after-school tutorial classes

  - display diverse abilities (cross-border Ss, SEN, NCS) within and across different classes

How to motivate students to write?

How to help them write independently?

How to cater for the diverse needs of students?

A Two-year tryout

Allocating 2 lessons per week to the teaching of writing

2014-2015: (P3)
Gradual Release of Responsibility Model
(Pearson & Gallagher, 1983)

2015-2016: (P2, P3)
Self-Regulated Strategy Development Model (SRSD)
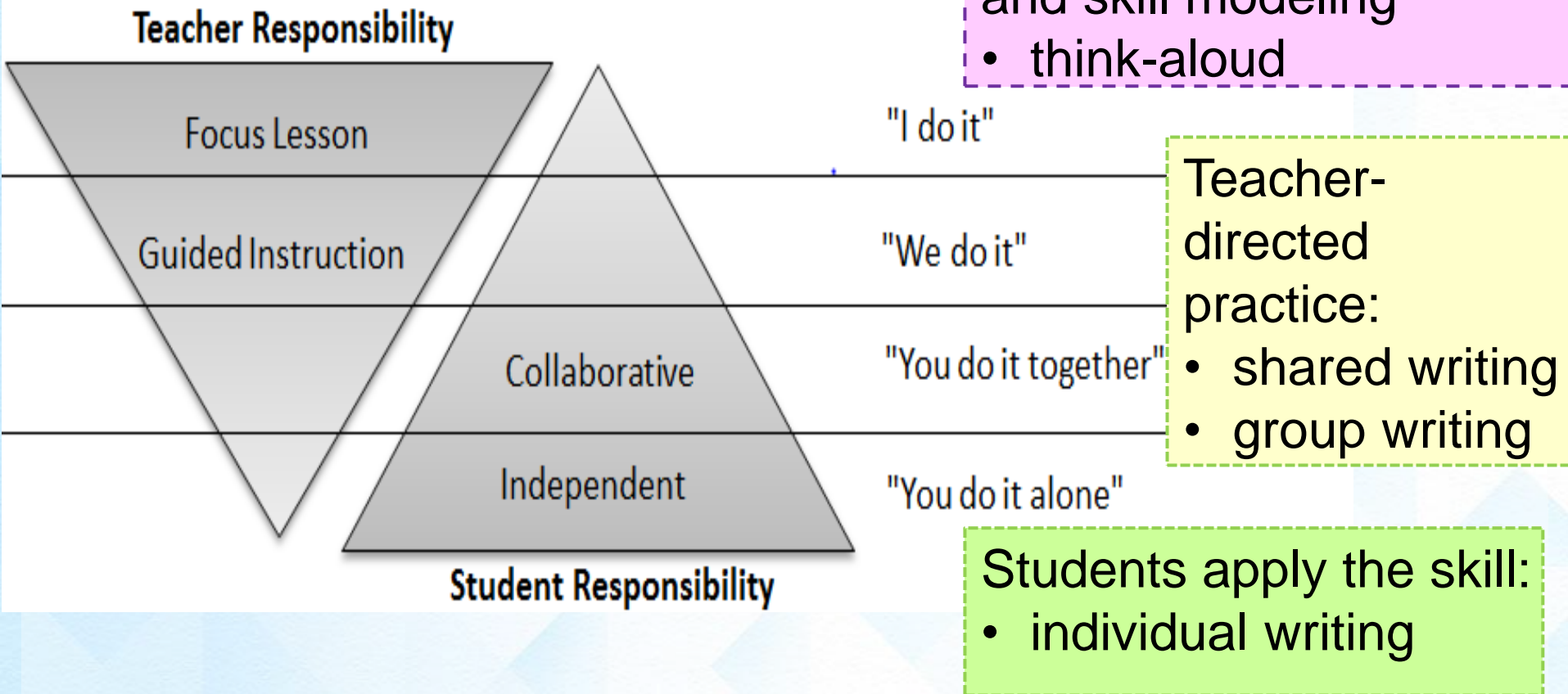(Harris & Graham, 1992)

- Setting learning objectives with reference to CG, LPF & Ss' work
- Using different groupings
- Designing graded worksheets

Writing tasks	Learning objectives (For average and high ability students)	Learning objectives (For remedial class)
Write a story about Town Mouse and Country Mouse	• Write a simple story with a beginning, a middle and an end • Write about the characters' feelings	• Write a simple story with a beginning, a middle and an end • Write about the characters' feelings
Write a story about making food	• Write a simple story with a beginning, a middle and an end • Write about the characters' feelings • *Use connectives (e.g. but, and) to link up ideas*	
Write a story about ordering food	• Write a simple story with a beginning, a middle and an end • Write about the characters' feelings • *Elaborate ideas by adding dialogues*	• Write a simple story with a beginning, a middle and an end • Write about the characters' feelings
Write a story about getting lost in a shopping centre	• Write a simple story with a beginning, a middle and an end • Write about the characters' feelings • *Elaborate ideas by giving reasons*	• *Use connectives (e.g. but, and) to link up ideas*
Write a story about buying a present	• Write a simple story with a beginning, a middle and an end • Write about the characters' feelings • Elaborate ideas by giving reasons and/or adding dialogues • Use connectives to link up ideas	• Write a simple story with a beginning, a middle and an end • Write about the characters' feelings • Use connectives (e.g. but, and) to link up ideas • *Elaborate ideas by adding dialogues*

Setting learning objectives with reference to CG, LPF and Ss' work

Introducing new learning objectives when Ss have mastered the ones introduced in the previous writing tasks

2014-2015 (P3): Gradual Release of Responsibility Model (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983)

Teacher Responsibility

Focus Lesson		"I do it"
Guided Instruction		"We do it"
	Collaborative	"You do it together"
	Independent	"You do it alone"

Student Responsibility

Teacher provides direct explanation, instruction, and skill modeling
• think-aloud

Teacher-directed practice:
• shared writing
• group writing

Students apply the skill:
• individual writing

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Teacher input and support

Student responsibility

introduced story elements, wrote story map, talked about story ending, wrote 1st para.

Discussed and wrote story ending, did shared-writing for paragraphs 2 and 3

wrote story map, wrote the story

explained task, demonstrated how to use connectives

revised story elements, discussed content, did shared-writing for 1st para.

wrote story map

wrote story map, wrote the story

explained task

revised story elements, revised and discussed how to elaborate ideas

wrote story map, wrote the story

Effective strategies from the experience in 2014-2015

- Introducing story elements (e.g. characters, setting, problem, what happened, ending)to help students scaffold their story writing

- Using pictures to help students recall the structure of a story

- Practising the same text type a few times to get students familiarised with the text type features

- Using the 'Who – do – what' sentence structure to help Ss produce simple sentences more accurately

2015-2016: (P2 & 3) Self-Regulated Strategy Development Model (SRSD) (Harris & Graham, 1992)

- An empirically validated model for supporting students as they compose by helping them **develop relevant cognitive and self-regulation skills**.

- It encourages Ss to accomplish writing tasks through **explicit instruction** and **simplifying the process** of composing narrative, expository and persuasive texts.

- Instruction begins as teacher-directed, but with a goal of **empowering Ss to be self-directed**.

- Students are encouraged to **monitor, evaluate** and **revise** their writing.

Using mnemonics and visuals to help students internalise the writing strategies and use them independently and with confidence

Story writing

C. There are **three** paragraphs in a story. They are:

Beginning (Tinky and Mike are at... They want to...)	
Middle (Tinky and Mike eat... They are...)	
Ending (At the end, Tinky and Mike... They are...)	

B. There are **six** parts in a story.

The magic word **C+SPACE** helps you remember the parts of a story.

C	S	P	A	C	E
Characters *(who)*	**Setting** *(when, where)*	**Problem** *(What do the characters want?)*	**Actions** *(What do the characters do?)*	**Conclusion** *(What do they do at the end?)*	**Emotion** *(feelings)*

Which paragraphs do "C S P A C E" go to?

Write.

Using mnemonics and visuals to help students internalise the writing strategies and use them independently and with confidence

Pictures and mnemonics (C-SPACE) were used to help Ss memorise and recall the parts of a story.

"Who + do + what" was used to help Ss write simple sentences about actions and conclusion.

"Who + want(s) to + do what" was used to help Ss write the problem.

"Who + is/am/are + feeling" was used to help Ss write about the character's feelings.

DETAILS FOR GOOD ENDINGS

Hope = Do the characters **hope** for something similar (or something very different) to happen again?

Opinion = What do the characters **think** about this experience?

Lesson = What **lesson** have the characters learnt from this experience?

**D**ecision = What do the characters **decide to do** after this experience?

"HOLD" was used to help P3 Ss brainstorm ideas for story ending.

Using mnemonics and visuals to help students internalise the writing strategies and use them independently and with confidence:

	Paragraph	What is it about?
T (Topic)	1	What are you writing about?
I (Ideas)	2	What are the main ideas?
D (Details)	2	Write more. Use 'what', 'when', 'where', 'who', 'why', 'how'.
E (Ending)	3	How do you feel? Do you like it?

Writing a description

A hamburger shape writing worksheet was used to help Ss visualise the text structure.
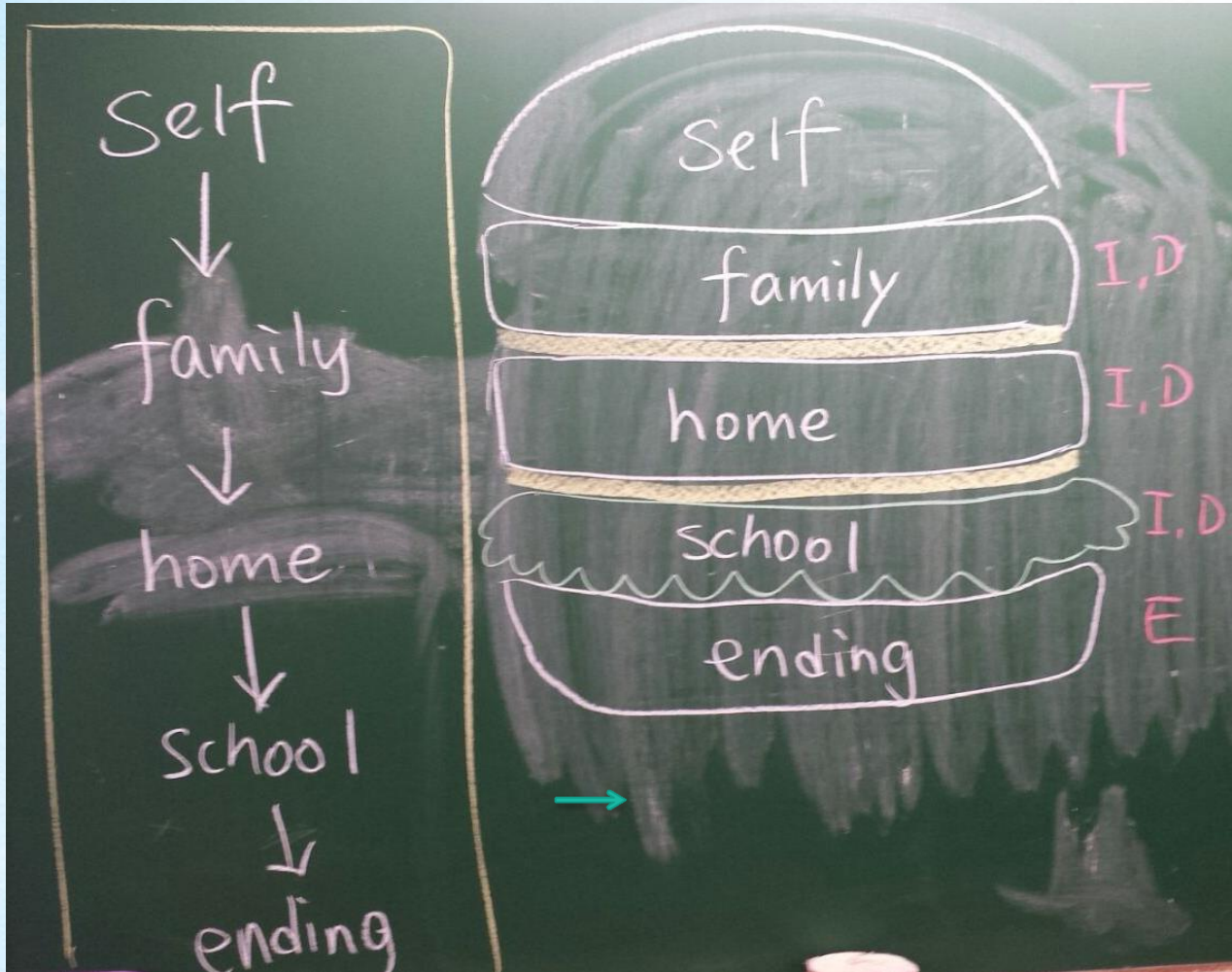
Teaching students what they can do when they have difficulties

Reminding students to refer to the word bank to look for the words they need for writing

'PIGS' was used to help Ss memorise the areas that they have to pay attention to when they write and revise their work

🐷 PIGS' Checklist 🐷		Self	Teacher
Punctuation	• Use a <u>full stop</u> at the <u>end</u> of a sentence.	☑	☹ 😐 ☺
	• Use <u>capital letters</u> at the <u>beginning</u> of a sentence, <u>names</u> of places and people.	☑	☹ 😐 ☺
Ideas	Write about		
	• Your friend's personal details	☑	☹ 😐 ☺
	• what you think about your friend	☑	☹ 😐 ☺
Grammar	☺ Agreements (-s, -es, -ies) e.g. ✓He has <u>two eyes</u>. ×He has <u>two eye</u>. ✓He has <u>no brothers</u> but <u>one sister</u>. × She has <u>no brother</u> but <u>one sisters</u>. ✓He goes to school on foot. ×<u>She go</u> to school on foot.	☑	☹ 😐 ☺
	☺ Verbs e.g. ✓He <u>is</u> tall. ×He <u>has</u> tall. ✓He <u>has</u> big eyes. ×He <u>is</u> big eyes.	☑	☹ 😐 ☺
Spelling	• Housework (e.g. wash the dishes, set the table)	☑	☹ 😐 ☺
	• Adjectives (e.g. tidy, helpful)	☑	☹ 😐 ☺

Empowering students to monitor, evaluate and revise their writing

The checklist specified the success criteria of the writing.

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	  ✓He goes to school on foot.
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		☐	☹ ☺ ☺

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After writing, students had to use the checklist to check and evaluate their work. Teachers gave them feedback.

Empowering students to monitor, evaluate and revise their writing

C. Set your targets.

Students had to set targets before writing.

☑ I will write _____99_____ words.

☐ I will use the checklist to check my work.

☑ I can write by using TIDE.

This one served to remind students of the writing strategy that they could use.

Empowering students to monitor, evaluate and revise their writing

Students had to evaluate their work and reflect on whether they had met their targets.

6. Do you meet your targets?
☐   I write _____ words.
         The rating for my work:
         Content   ☺ ☺ ☹
         Language   ☺ ☺ ☹
   ☐   I will do better in content / language next time.
   ☐   I will give more examples next time.
   ☐   I will look at my work more carefully next time by reading it aloud and pointing to the words.
   ☐   I will read more books to learn more words and ideas.

Suggestions were given to help Ss set targets in order to improve their writing skills. Ss selected the strategies they preferred.

Impact

Students' motivation and confidence in writing increased.

Students took part in the writing process more independently.

Students created their own mind maps for familiar topics.

Students made use of their word bank to look for the words they needed for the writing.

Students made use of the tools taught to help them brainstorm and organise ideas.

Students' writing skills improved.

Facilitating factors

1. Upholding the belief that all students can learn
   - Creating opportunities for students to have a sense of achievement
   - Addressing students' negative talk

2. Setting clear milestones for different groups of learners to achieve independent writing
   - Planning the curriculum holistically
   - Setting clear learning expectations for different ability groups
   - Analysing student work with reference to the learning objectives

Facilitating factors

3. Adjusting the writing policy
    - setting a fixed time for students to write weekly
        → develop a writing habit

    - completing writing tasks at school
        → provide timely feedback, give support to students, have a better understanding of students' learning

    - revising practice in doing corrections
        → do corrections for mistakes related to the target structures only to avoid killing students' motivation to write long texts

Way forward

Spend more time on giving feedback to students instead of input when working on familiar text types

Introduce different ways to write introduction/conclusion/ story opening/ story ending to further improve students' writing skills

Teach students how to select ideas

Introduce other text types (persuasive texts, explanatory texts, etc.)