Title: Our Learning Journey of Promoting Reading and Reading across the Curriculum

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Introduction

Promoting reading across the curriculum (RaC) is an important educational initiative that widens students' reading horizons and broadens their knowledge. By implementing RaC, schools not only enhance students' reading ability, but also develop their lifelong love for reading (CDC, 2014). This article documents the learning journey of two English chairpersons who participated in a Learning Community and then undertook some innovative endeavours on promoting RaC and cross-curricular learning. Their endeavours indeed reflect the important messages reiterated in the updated Primary Education Curriculum Guide (CDC, 2022) (Pilot Version) – when conducting curriculum planning, schools should adopt approaches such as organic integration, natural connection, diversified strategies, mutual coordination, learning within and beyond the classroom, and whole-school participation to provide students with meaningful and diverse learning experiences. Apart from depicting what activities were planned and implemented to promote RaC, this article also shares the impact of the implemented work on teaching and learning as well as collaboration with other subject teachers.

School background

S.K.H. St. Andrew's Primary School, located in the Sham Shui Po district, is led by Mr. Tam, who advocates for playful, engaging, and stimulating learning experiences. He consistently encourages the English Team to develop creative and meaningful projects that allow students to learn through play and exploration in a positive and happy environment.

The English Team's motto is "Learning English is FUN!" and "Let's learn from errors!" The teachers strive to foster students' reading interests through a diverse range of activities in their English lessons. However, they have limited experience in promoting reading across the curriculum. In 2021/-2022, the two English chairpersons joined the Learning Community for Primary School English Language Teacher Leaders organized by the Education Bureau. The focus of the Learning Community was on promoting reading and RaC. Through the Learning Community, members studied articles on RaC and engaged in professional exchange, sharing ideas and progress on promoting RaC. They also learned

how to develop curriculum plans and received feedback from other members. The two English panel heads were inspired by their peers' sharing, and decided to innovate and try out new ideas to promote RaC in their school.

Trying out new ideas in Primary Two

After reviewing their existing curriculum, the two panel heads decided to implement some new practices in their P.2 classes. Firstly, they attempted to promote RaC through Reading Workshops and expanded the range of text types and reading skills from solely narrative to both narrative and informational texts. Secondly, they aimed to promote reading and learning across different subjects, including Science and Arts Education through meaningful activities. Thirdly, they utilised Augmented Reality (AR) to maximise student learning.

The try-out was implemented in Reading Workshops, where the team selected three books, including Spider in a Glider (fiction), Insects and Spiders (non-fiction), and Inside the Spider's Web (non-fiction). The focus questions for the Reading Workshops were: 1) Are spiders insects? 2) How do spiders spin webs? 3) What are spiders good at? and 4) What are you good at? In addition to targeting reading skills, the team aimed to promote positive values and attitudes. To make the lessons more engaging, they created an interesting context where Butterfly invited Dragonfly and Beetle to her insect party, but Spider was unsure if he could join. Students had to read more books to determine if Spider was an insect and if he could attend the party. They also provided the opportunity for students to scan QR codes to learn more about insects through AR. Apart from engaging students in reading during the English lessons, students were asked to do home reading and complete two post-reading activities: 1) reading an information book about insects and spiders, and 2) reading an information book about spider webs. Through the Reading Workshops and home reading, students had the opportunity to read to learn more about insects, while developing a love for reading in English.

The team observed that their students were highly engaged and concentrated during the Reading Workshops. They also noted that while some of the tasks were slightly challenging, students were able to complete them with enjoyment. Furthermore, students were enthusiastic about uploading their work on Padlet and seeing their efforts online. Inspired by this success, the English Team planned to attempt a larger scale collaborative project with other subject teachers to promote RaC. With the support and feedback from the Learning Community, they developed an implementation plan for a post-exam activity, despite the pandemic.

The post-exam activity, which was linked to the G.E. Programme, aimed to help students learn fun things about the world through reading and trial and error. The team hoped to motivate students in reading through breaking their school record on Hoop Glider and used the book "Spider in a Glider"

as an entry point to encourage students to read across different subjects.

Overview of the RaC project

Below is the overview of the RaC project (Figure 1):

Total no. of lessons:	• English: 10 • Mathematics: 3 • Visual Art:1 • General Studies: 1
Book concept:	• Differences between narratives and information texts (e.g. title, sub-title, and illustrations)
Reading skills & strategies:	• Locate specific information using pictorial/ contextual clues • Identify the main ideas (e.g. the use of topic sentences) • Identify details that support the main ideas • Re-read to establish and confirm meaning
Other language skills:	• Develop interviewing skills and presentation skills (PVCE: posture, voice, content and eye-contact) • Develop report writing skills
Values education:	• Respect for others • Care for others • Everyone has his/ her strengths in a particular aspect. We should respect for others' strengths and use our strengths to help others

Figure 1: Overview of the RaC project

This project aimed to develop students' reading skills and strategies, such as identifying details that support main ideas and re-reading to confirm meaning. Additionally, students would engage in tasks that enhance other language skills, such as interviewing and presentation skills. The project also had a focus on cultivating positive values, including respect for others and recognizing individual strengths in specific areas.

The project's goal was to provide students with opportunities to apply their knowledge and skills across different subjects and KLAs in a meaningful context. It was hoped that through participating in the planned activities, students would appreciate the value of reading texts from various disciplines, extend their knowledge, and broaden their perspectives. The project would also provide a taste of what Design Thinking is.

An essential feature of the project was promoting reading through the collaborative efforts of teachers from different KLAs/subjects. With the support of a Chinese teacher, teachers from other KLAs/subjects were empowered to help students develop the same skills when reading Chinese texts in other subjects/KLAs.

Implementation of the RaC project

9. Report on the best design of the hoop glider
➢ write a brief report
➢ present the reports (PVCE)

10. Prize giving
1. The Best Design Award
2. Creativity Award
3. STEM Inspiration Award
4. The Best Co-operation Award

1. Introduce the context :
➢ Ch 7 Amazing World Record and World Record News
➢ Watch the video of our school's record on the furthest hoop glider
➢ Read the message from the principal

2. Teach reading strategies and values and attitudes :
Read two information texts and one narrative book
1. Spider in a Glider
2. How do gliders work?
3. Tokyo Olympic fencing champion (Edgar Cheung Ka-long)

English

Maths

3.Learn the measuring unit:
➢ Read an article about measuring unit (cm vs inch) in the Math lesson
(application of reading strategies)

8. Do experiments and test their designs of hoop gliders

Hoop glider competition

Let's break the school hoop glider record!

V.A.

4. Learn how to make hoop gliders:
➢ Read an instruction about steps of making hoop gliders (application of reading strategies)
➢ Follow the instruction to make a hoop glider

7. Learn how to present data using charts :
➢ Process data of the survey
➢ Make chats

Learn the common units for measuring distance (i.e. mm, cm, m, km) and choose the most suitable unit to measure the flying distance

Learn how to use the measuring wheel

Maths

English

General studies

Through the English activities, our students learned :
➢ Respect for others' opinions
➢ Care for others and help one another

6.Our P.4 students:
➢ design 3 models of hoop gliders
➢ design questionnaires
➢ interview others using PVCE

5. Learn flying principle of gliders:
➢ Read an article about how gliders work
➢ Guide students to think about:
What happens if you:
1. increase or decrease the length of straw?
2. add more hoops to the glider?
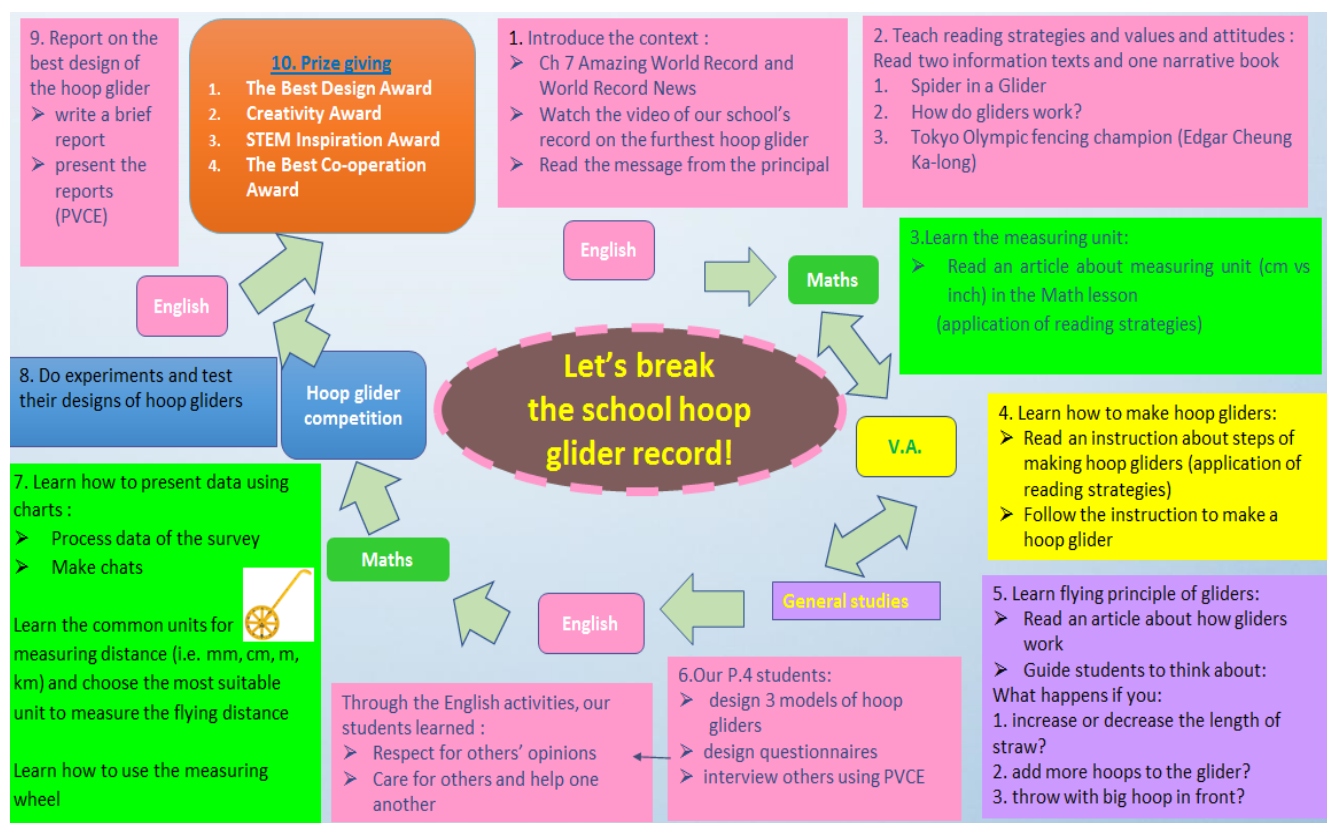3. throw with big hoop in front?

Figure 2: Implementation of the RaC project

The post-exam RaC project was implemented across different KLAs/subjects and aspects of the school curriculum in the following manner (Figure 2):

1. In the first English lesson, students were introduced to the project's context, which was breaking the school record for the furthest hoop glider. They watched a video produced by the teachers about the school's current record and were guided to read the message from the principal.

2. In the second English lesson, students were taught reading strategies, values, and attitudes. They read two informational texts and a narrative book, including "Spider in a Glider," "How do gliders work?," and "Tokyo Olympic fencing champion." The teachers guided students to develop different reading strategies, such as predicting, questioning, and locating key words and topic sentences. Positive values and attitudes were promoted through reading the article about Edgar Cheung Ka-long.

3. In the Mathematics lesson, students developed their reading skills by identifying main ideas and key supporting details through reading an article about measuring units (cm vs. inch).

4. In the Visual Art lesson, students learned how to make hoop gliders by following an instruction

manual and developed reading skills and strategies, such as recognizing the presentation of ideas through headings, spacing, and bold print.

5. In the General Studies (GS) lesson, students learned about the flying principle of gliders by reading an article and were guided to think about how variations in design affect the glider's performance.

6. In the English lessons, students designed three models of hoop gliders and created questionnaires for interviewing others. They learned the importance of using PVCE during interviews and conducted interviews to gather opinions about their hoop glider designs. Positive values, such as respect for others' opinions and caring for one another, were emphasized.

7. In the Mathematics lessons, students learned how to present data using charts and chose the most suitable unit to measure the flying distance of their hoop gliders. They also learned how to use the measuring wheel.

8. Students participated in the hoop glider competition, conducting experiments and testing their designs. They recorded the flying distance of their hoop gliders, and some were able to break the school's previous record.

9. In the English lesson, students learned about report writing and summarizing findings using comparatives and superlatives. They reported on the best hoop glider design, utilising interview data and what they had learned in Mathematics lessons. Finally, they wrote a brief report and presented their findings using PVCE.

10. In the prize-giving ceremony, students were recognized for their talents and performances, receiving awards such as The Best Design Award, Creativity Award, STEM Inspiration Award, and The Best Co-operation Award.

In summary, the RAC project was implemented across different KLAs/subjects, utilizing a variety of reading skills and strategies, promoting positive values and attitudes, and culminating in a successful competition and presentation of findings. The project provided students with the opportunity to apply their knowledge and skills across different KLAs/subjects in a meaningful context, promoting interdisciplinary learning.

Impact on learning and teaching

Students' voices:

- We learned reading skills in English and other lessons and used them to understand Visual Art, Science, and Mathematical articles. We learned how to design questionnaires, present data in bar charts, and write a report in English! We enjoyed the lessons!
- The activities were fun and we learned how to use straws, paper strips, and tape to make hoop gliders and measure the flying distance using the measuring wheel during the hoop glider competition! We loved it!
- We interviewed teachers and our fellow schoolmates in English. We felt excited and amazed when we asked the interviewees which of our designs was the best!
- Although not everyone won prizes, it felt good that teachers and our classmates recognized that everyone has strengths. Breaking the principal's hoop glider record was the cherry on top!

Teachers' voices:

- Ms Lau, Chief Panel Head: The Hoop Glider Challenge aimed to create a playful and engaging task for students to learn through trial and error. My students learned to read across the curriculum to attain their goal. To quote Margaret Fuller, "Today a reader, tomorrow a leader."
- Ms Lee, Panel Head & P4 English teacher: Design Thinking was introduced to facilitate students in solving the problems they encountered while making their hoop gliders fly the furthest. During the activity, teachers observed that students were able to utilise Design Thinking during the process.
- Mr. Jackson, NET teacher: I provided support with the design of reading materials and posters. I observed that students were able to use and speak English with confidence.
- Ms. Tsang, P4 English teacher: Students collected opinions about their hoop glider designs through interviews and utilise assessments from their PVCE presentations as learning methods when making and testing their hoop gliders. My students enjoyed the lessons!
- Ms. Lo, P4 English teacher: Throughout the task, teachers facilitated students in finding their strengths, boosting their confidence, and motivating them to keep trying. My students were more motivated to learn English!

Impact on collaboration with other subject teachers:

- Teachers developed a heightened awareness of the importance of promoting RaC with concerted efforts.
- There was closer collaboration between teachers from different KLAs/subjects.

Reflection

What have the two panel heads gained from the Learning Community?

Cross-school professional sharing has enhanced the professionalism of teachers, which includes cross-school experience sharing. Through this Learning Community, the two panel heads have gained ways and ideas to promote reading and RaC in school. Furthermore, they have learned what RaC is through reading from literature review and discussion in the Learning Community. Lastly, they have established teacher networking with other schools.

What have they learned from the experience of planning and implementing these activities?

They have learned that RaC requires careful planning, effort, and hard work. It is essential to always have a Plan B, such as changes to activities due to Covid-19. It takes time to develop everything from scratch, but making a start, keeping trying, and revising is important. They also learned that bottom-up and top-down cross-departmental cooperation is possible, and building on students' knowledge on a specific topic such as GS through cross-subject learning deepens their learning.

Facilitating factors in promoting RaC

Several factors have facilitated the promotion of RaC. First, the eagerness of the English panel heads and the core team to explore and learn more about RaC has been instrumental. The two panel heads also took the initiative to initiate collaboration with subject teachers and other subject teachers. In addition, a better understanding of the roles of teachers, where reading should be taught by all subject teachers, has been important. Teamwork and the involvement of "open-minded" teachers have also contributed to the success. Lastly, professional support from the Education Bureau and the Principal, as well as support from the Learning Community, have been crucial in promoting RaC. The teachers highly recommend other teachers to join professional learning communities to enhance their teaching skills and share best practices.

Way forward

Moving forward, the English team plans to promote RaC at other levels of their school. The English teachers will refine the plan and materials used in this event and make it a tradition of the school for years to come. They believe that promoting RaC will enhance students' learning outcomes and develop their love for reading and learning. They are committed to continuing our efforts to promote reading across the curriculum and collaborate with other subject teachers to provide an integrated learning experience for students.

References

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