

Guiding students to develop self-directed learning strategies that support them to learn how to learn

3.10 Using life-wide learning to develop students' self-directed learning capabilities and bolster their confidence in language use

Background

Developing students' self-directed learning (SDL) capabilities has been a major concern of Chan Sui Ki (La Salle) Primary School. English teachers of the school would like to develop Key Stage 1 students' SDL capabilities, and concurrently, enhance their confidence in using English. In 2019/20, they made use of a life-wide learning (LWL) activity as a lever to develop P3 students' SDL capabilities and increase their confidence in using English outside the classroom.

Level
P3

Strategies used

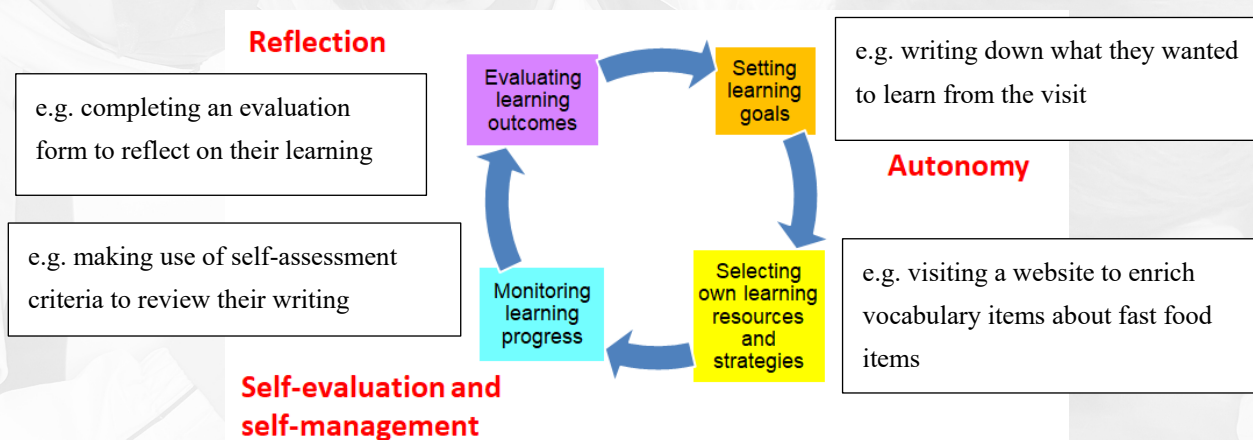
Two major strategies were deployed to build up students' SDL capabilities and confidence in using English, speaking in particular.

1. Creating an authentic context for students to use English through LWL

LWL enables students to extend their learning outside the classroom, and to achieve some learning targets that are not easy to achieve through classroom learning alone (Education Bureau, 2019). To this end, English teachers organised a visit to a fast food shop to enable students to apply what they had learnt in the English lessons in a real context and to increase their confidence in speaking English beyond the classroom.

2. Incorporating SDL elements into the LWL activity to develop students' habit of and competence in learning on their own

English teachers used a four-step process to design the SDL tasks for students to develop an SDL habit and become more competent in learning by themselves.



The four-step approach adopted for designing SDL tasks to be completed before and after the LWL activity

What happened

Unit chosen	“Buying Food at McDonald’s”
Unit objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> To teach students vocabulary about food and drinks and the simple past tense for writing a recount of the visit to a fast food shop near the school To develop students’ SDL by incorporating an LWL activity into the unit design
Major tasks in the LWL activity	<p>Students were required to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> apply their mathematics knowledge to calculate the total amount needed for the order before the visit; and converse with the cashier in English during the visit to make their purchases successful using “May I ...”.

Before the visit

Students completed different SDL tasks to prepare for the visit to the fast food shop.

SDL elements	Steps	Major tasks done
Autonomy	Setting learning goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Before the unit started, students completed a KWL chart to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> activate their prior knowledge about food and drinks at a fast food shop (please refer to the first column of the chart); and enable them to set their learning goals through writing down the food items they wanted to learn (see the second column of the KWL chart). Before visiting the fast food shop, students were asked to write down two goals that they wanted to achieve during the visit. The goals that students set could be related to positive values and attitudes, proper behaviour and/or language use.

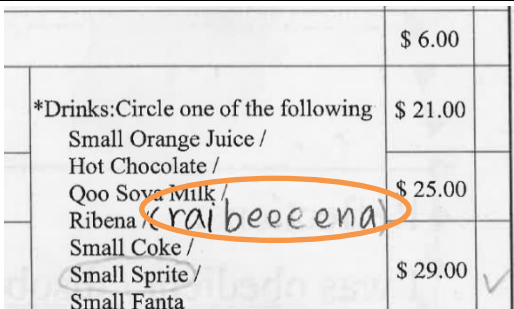
My Goals		Put a ✓ if you did it.
* e.g. I will follow my teachers.		✓
* I will speak English.		✓
* I won't run.		✓

Language use: I will speak English.

Proper behaviour: I won't run.

Students setting their goals to achieve during the visit (unedited work)

SDL elements	Steps	Major tasks done
Autonomy	Selecting own learning resources and strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using the KWL chart, students identified and selected the learning resources or strategies (e.g. books, the Internet, a personal visit to the shop) that could help them learn more vocabulary about fast food items. Teachers also encouraged students to browse the official website of the fast food shop they were going to visit. Through the website, students could learn the vocabulary about the food and drinks that the shop provided through authentic materials. Students used different strategies to learn English words. Some of them used drawings to help themselves remember the word meanings more easily and effectively while others wrote the definitions of words in English to tackle unfamiliar words. A student also wrote “raibeeena” next to the drink name “Ribena” on the order list to pronounce the name. <div data-bbox="783 943 1265 1507" data-label="Image"> </div> <p data-bbox="719 1518 1310 1581">Students using drawings and definitions to tackle word meanings (unedited work)</p>

SDL elements	Steps	Major tasks done
		 <p>Another strategy used by a student to pronounce a drink name (unedited work)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key Stage 1 students may need more teachers' support when developing their SDL capabilities. In view of this, teachers prepared a dialogue between a customer and a cashier for students to practise on their own before the visit.
Self-evaluation and self-management	Monitoring learning progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students were encouraged to keep practising and to memorise the useful phrases in the dialogue so that they would not need to refer to it when making purchases during the visit.

During the visit

After completing the preparation work, students visited the fast food shop to purchase food and drinks. During the visit, they needed to apply what they had learnt in the classroom such as using "May I ..." to order food politely. In addition, students had to observe the cashier's manners used for helping customers and to record the observations after the visit.

B. Staff

- Attitude: The cashier was *friendly/ polite/ impolite/ rude.
- What did he/she do? *Circle the letter(s).
 He/She (a) talked to me gently./
 (b) had a bright smile./
 (c) did not talk to me gently./
 (d) did not answer my questions.

did not shout

A student's observations and evaluation of the cashier's manners (unedited work)

As the conversation with the cashier in the real purchase could be different from the dialogue prepared for practice, students needed to listen to the cashier attentively and respond naturally and simultaneously while making the order.

Snapshots of students' visit to the fast food shop are shown below:



Students visiting a fast food shop near the school



Students using English to order food and drinks at the fast food shop

After the visit

SDL tasks were assigned to students for monitoring and evaluating their own learning.

SDL elements	Steps	Major tasks done								
Self-evaluation and self-management	Monitoring learning progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students wrote a recount of the visit to the fast food shop. To develop students' habit of monitoring their writing, teachers designed a simple self-assessment form for them to check their writing against the task requirements before they submitted their own recounts. 								
Reflection	Evaluating learning outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students reflected on the visit to the fast food shop. In this task, they needed to assess if the goals set before the visit, including language learning and behaving well during the visit, were achieved. <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 10px 0;"> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: center;">My Goals</th> <th style="text-align: center;">Put a ✓ if you did it.</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>* e.g. I will follow my teachers.</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>* I will</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>* </td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p>Reflections: I was <u>obedient / disobedient / smart / polite / impolite</u> (Circle the best adjective)/ _____ because _____</p> </div> <p style="text-align: center;">A task sheet for students to reflect on their two goals set before the visit and behaviour during the visit</p>	My Goals	Put a ✓ if you did it.	* e.g. I will follow my teachers.		* I will		*	
My Goals	Put a ✓ if you did it.									
* e.g. I will follow my teachers.										
* I will										
*										

SDL elements	Steps	Major tasks done
Reflection	Evaluating learning outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students used an evaluation form to reflect on their language use and performance in the LWL activity. Using the KWL chart, students reflected on what they had learnt from the lessons/unit/self-learning (e.g. food items, quantifiers).

Impact

Infused SDL elements into the school writing curriculum

Having gained some experience in developing Key Stage 1 students' SDL capabilities, English teachers infused some SDL elements into the school English Language curriculum in P2 in 2020/21. P2 students learnt to set their own learning goals before writing, and to use a checklist to review their writing against the task requirements. They were also provided with some online resources such as videos to expand their vocabulary repertoire about, for example, activities and seasonal clothes.

Increased enjoyment in learning

As observed throughout the visit, students actively engaged in the LWL activity. They showed their enthusiasm about using English to order food and drinks at the fast food shop. After the visit, an informal interview with students was conducted to find out their level of enjoyment in the activity. Students gave a thumbs-up sign to express enjoyment. Through this enjoyable learning activity, students' motivation to learn English inside and outside the classroom was enhanced.



Students giving the thumbs-up to the LWL activity to express much enjoyment in it

Enhanced students' language skills

The project provided ample opportunities for students to apply the English input in a variety of tasks, resulting in the enhancement of their language skills.

- Their vocabulary repertoire related to food and drinks was expanded. In the informal interview conducted after the visit, students shared that they had learnt some new vocabulary items such as "medium" and "muffin".
- The recount of the visit revealed that students could use their observations on the cashier's manners as the supporting evidence to back up their main points in writing. Appropriate connectives such as "because" were also used to show the relationship between the opinion and the supporting evidence.

The student's opinion

I thought the staff was friendly and polite because she talked to me gently and had a bright smile.

A student writing about the cashier's manners with supporting evidence in the recount (unedited work)

- Providing supporting details to back up the opinion
- Using the connective "because" to link the opinion and the supporting evidence

- c. Students were able to use the simple past tense to write the recount as well as self-reflection. From the excerpts of the recount and the self-reflection, students used "thought", "was", "talked", "had" and "spoke" appropriately.

Reflections:

I was obedient / disobedient / smart / polite / impolite (Circle the best adjective) / because I spoke to the cashier politely.

A student using the simple past tense to write the self-reflection (unedited work)

- d. Based on the observations on students' performance during the visit, students showed their confidence in using English to make purchases. When the food they wanted to order was not available, students were not nervous but able to use English to change their food order immediately without teachers' assistance.

Nurtured students' learning skills and self-directed learning capabilities

With teachers' support, students were able to evaluate their learning goals in their self-reflections. In the excerpt below, the student provided a concrete example to support why he/she was able to fulfil the second goal – being polite during the visit.

The student set "I will be polite" as the second goal of the visit.

My Goals		Put a ✓ if you did it.
* e.g. I will follow my teachers.		✓
* I will keep quiet.		✓
* I will be polite.		✓

Reflections:
I was obedient / disobedient / smart / polite / impolite (Circle the best adjective) / because I said 'thank you'.

A concrete example ("I said 'thank you'") to show how the second goal was achieved.

A student's self-reflection on how the learning goal was achieved (unedited work)

Also, students could apply the same learning strategies in different contexts. Students were asked to use drawings to indicate what they wanted to buy during the visit to the fast food shop, and the same strategy was applied effectively when they completed the food order list.

8. Small Coke / Small Sprite / Small Fanta
9. Egg and Cheese Burger + Hash Browns / Fresh Corn Cup + Drinks*
10. Hotcakes (2 pieces) + Hash Browns / Fresh Corn Cup + Drinks*
11. Filet-O- Fish + Hash Browns / Fresh Corn Cup + Drinks*

The same learning skill applied in a different context (unedited work)

Conclusion

Using an LWL activity to motivate Key Stage 1 students to learn English and integrating SDL elements into the activity design have yielded very fruitful outcomes on learning and teaching. With the experience gained through the project, the English panel will continue to organise LWL activities at other levels to enhance students' confidence and competence in using English in a variety of contexts outside the school, and develop their SDL capabilities with a view to improving other learning and language skills such as reading.

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Education Bureau. (2019). *Life-wide Learning Grant* [EDB Circular No. 16/2019]. Retrieved from <https://applications.edb.gov.hk/circular/upload/EDBC/EDBC19016E.pdf>

Thornton, K. (2010). Supporting self-directed learning: A framework for teachers. *Language Education in Asia*, 1(1), 158-170. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5746/LEiA/10/V1/A14/Thornton>

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3.11 Facilitating students' reading to learn capabilities through nurturing them into self-directed vocabulary learners

Background

With a view to developing students to be lifelong learners, Yaumati Catholic Primary School (Hoi Wang Road) has made self-directed learning and reading to learn skills their major development focuses. Vocabulary enrichment in Primary 4 was chosen as the entry point for implementing the initiatives as research shows that vocabulary knowledge is closely related to students' ability and confidence in comprehending unfamiliar texts independently, which are essential for them to read to learn.

Level
P4

Strategies used

1. Explicit teaching of vocabulary building skills

In order to equip students with the skills and confidence in learning, remembering and using new words independently, teachers explicitly taught a range of carefully selected vocabulary building skills with emphasis placed on helping students understand **what** the target vocabulary building skills are, **when** and **how** to use them, and **why** it would be beneficial to use them.

2. Incorporating the learning and application of the target vocabulary building skills into unit design

When planning their school curriculum, teachers matched the target vocabulary building skills with the most suitable texts in the textbook units. They also provided students with many opportunities for applying these skills in their learning. Some of these target skills included guessing meanings of unknown words, identifying synonyms and using dictionaries and thesauri.

3. Implementing a self-directed vocabulary learning programme

Students were encouraged to apply the target vocabulary learning skills and enrich their own vocabulary outside class time. A self-directed vocabulary learning programme aiming at facilitating students to learn new words of their own choice and at their own pace was introduced after they had shown basic mastery of the target vocabulary building skills.

4. Gamifying vocabulary learning to enhance students' interest in learning English words

e-Learning activities were employed to facilitate peer learning and gamify the learning process, thereby, enhancing students' interest in learning English words. For instance, students were invited to contribute interesting new words and their meanings to their class-based digital word wall and vote for the best contribution made, so that they could learn and appreciate each other's work. Online competitions and games on the target words were also held regularly inside and outside class time for students to review and recycle the new words constantly in a fun way.

What happened

1. Planning with an end in mind

After deciding to build their P4 students' foundation for reading to learn through developing them into self-directed vocabulary learners, teachers discussed and agreed on the expected learning outcomes, assessment tools to use and evidence of student learning to collect for evaluating the effectiveness of the programme.

Expected learning outcomes	Assessment tools	Evidence to collect
In their writing, students should be able to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> make better word choices, such as replacing simple words with synonyms; and use the new words they acquired in self-directed learning tasks. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Formative and summative assessments Self-evaluation checklists and reflection notes A student survey 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Students' writing completed during the school term with: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> annotations and highlighting of the sophisticated words they used notes they made about their word choices in the self-reflection part Scripts of writing exams Students' responses about the impact of the programme on their word choices in the student survey

An excerpt of the expected learning outcomes, assessment tools to use and evidence of student learning to collect

2. Selecting and incorporating the target vocabulary building skills into the school English Language curriculum

Teachers selected appropriate vocabulary building skills to focus on in P4 with reference to the *English Language Education Key Learning Area Curriculum Guide (Primary 1 – Secondary 6)*. Some examples of the target vocabulary building skills included:

- inferring word meaning using contextual clues and knowledge of word formation;
- learning definitions and pronunciation of unfamiliar words using online dictionaries;
- using thesauri to learn synonyms and antonyms of the target words; and
- recording and retaining the new words collected.

Only one to two target skills were introduced in each term. These target skills were taught explicitly during reading lessons in the earlier textbook units and students were given many opportunities to practise applying these skills in all components of the curriculum, such as reading, writing and speaking, in the rest of the school term.

How to work out meaning in texts

1. Re-read the sentence slowly
2. Think about the topic of the sentence (What is it about?)
3. Use your background knowledge about this topic
4. Look at the words before & after the unknown word.

Working out unknown word in texts

1. Miss Chow is very spatated. She loses her keys, books and pens nearly every day!

a. friendly b. bad luck
c. careless d. strange

"Spatated" is a new word to me. What does the other sentence say about Miss Chow?

What do I know about people who lose their things all the time?

Actually, "spatated" is NOT a real word but you can still tell what it means!

Some PowerPoint slides used to teach a vocabulary building skill explicitly

Class reader: The Journey of Single-Use Plastics

Application/Practice/Assessment for learning: inferring word meaning using contextual clues - looking up word meaning in a dictionary

Page number	Unfamiliar words	Contextual clues	Possible answers from students
3	create	Single-use plastics are plastics that we use once, then throw away. This creates a lot of rubbish.	Make, cause
4	Trucks	Pick up all the rubbish, picture	Big cars/vehicles, lorry
7	rinse	Brush our teeth and rinse our mouth	Wash/clean
6, 7, 8, 10, 11	Ocean	The ocean is home to many animals, from whales to turtles...	Sea (let students know that they should check their guess each time they see the word)
10	enter	When plastic enters the	Get into

An extract of the teachers' plan on letting their students apply the target vocabulary skills during a reading lesson

Compo 2 Boring words
Please help your classmates replace the boring words with wow words.

Original sentences in students' writing

- Ian **said**, "The apples are so **cheap**."
- Ian was very **scared**.
- Ian was **happy** because he caught the thief.

Revised sentences

- Jamil: Ian noted that the apples were very cheap and quite **affordable**.
- Jamil: Ian was so **scared** and afraid that he **petrified**.
- Selina: Ian was **glad** because he caught the thief.
- Alfred: Ian **exclaimed**, "The apples are so cheap."
- Hung: Ian was **alarmed**.
- Kate: Ian was **delighted** because he caught the thief.

A Padlet wall used in a writing feedback lesson for students to improve their diction using the thesaurus or words they collected in their self-directed vocabulary learning journal

3. Implementation of the self-directed vocabulary learning programme

At the beginning of the programme, students were introduced to the rationale behind each component in the self-directed learning process and the expected learning outcomes of the programme. Students were required to set the target for the number of new words they planned to learn within the given period of time, choose the target skills they would like to practise, monitor and evaluate their own progress, which would give them information to help themselves do better in the next phase of the programme.

Students made use of the self-directed vocabulary learning journal to record their learning process and the new words they learnt in the programme and they were encouraged to share the evidence and reflections on their learning with a family member so that they could benefit from the feedback received to further improve their learning in the next phase.

Date	No. of vocabulary items I plan to learn	No. of vocabulary items I have learnt	Rate
8/2/2021 - 15/2/2021	10	12	😊😊😊😊

My favourite word learnt this week: rubber ring

Now, I will try to remember everything you know about this word. Give me some feedback below.

Planning **Monitoring**

Family Member's Feedback

Relationship 關係: mother

His/Her explanation shows that he/she understands the word very well. 他/她的講解顯示他/她非常認識這個詞彙。

Evaluating **Self-evaluation** **Inviting feedback from others**

A sample of a student's plan and evaluation in the self-directed vocabulary learning journal

Using the dictionary to gain a richer understanding of a new word

My new word: fade

Dictionary definitions: (Tick ✓ the right box)

Noun Verb Adjective Adverb

Others: _____

to become less bright, or to make something less bright.

Example sentence(s): Years of sunlight had faded the carpet.

*Synonym(s): dim, vanish *Antonym(s): sharpen, brighten

(A picture to help me remember this word)

Making word & picture-word associations to retain the new word

IT'S YOUR TURN NOW!

Choose a prefix to study: un- Meaning: not

Using the dictionary to learn new words with the same prefix

In the above prefix can you find? Underline the prefix in the table below.

Prefix	Definition & Examples
<u>un</u> believable	not believable So you're telling me that he broke the vase on purpose? <u>Un</u> believable, he would never do such a thing!
<u>un</u> controllable	not controllable My dog is running around the house and barking. <u>Un</u> controllable! He's uncontrollable!
<u>un</u> forgivable	not forgivable What you did was <u>un</u> forgivable. Everyone is mad at you.
<u>un</u> breakable	not breakable This gemstone is <u>un</u> breakable.

Using the words in new contexts

Target word(s)

oyster disgusting

The word(s) in writing:

Today, I tried to eat an oyster but the taste was disgusting. I will not eat again.

Target word(s)

muttered mentioned thought

The word(s) in writing:

My brother was watering the flowers. I was next to him so I heard him muttering something. "Ugh, this is so annoying! I hate watering flowers! Why was I forced to do this?" he spoke to himself. I heard him mention that he was forced to do so. "Didn't he choose to do so?" I thought.

Samples of students' entries made in their self-directed vocabulary learning

4. Incorporating assessment as, for and of learning into daily teaching

Teachers employed various assessment strategies in this project to inform them of their students' learning progress so that they could take follow-up actions, such as re-teaching the vocabulary building skills, if necessary. They made use of questions asked about the

(Writing) Focus Marks on Word Choice (10 marks)

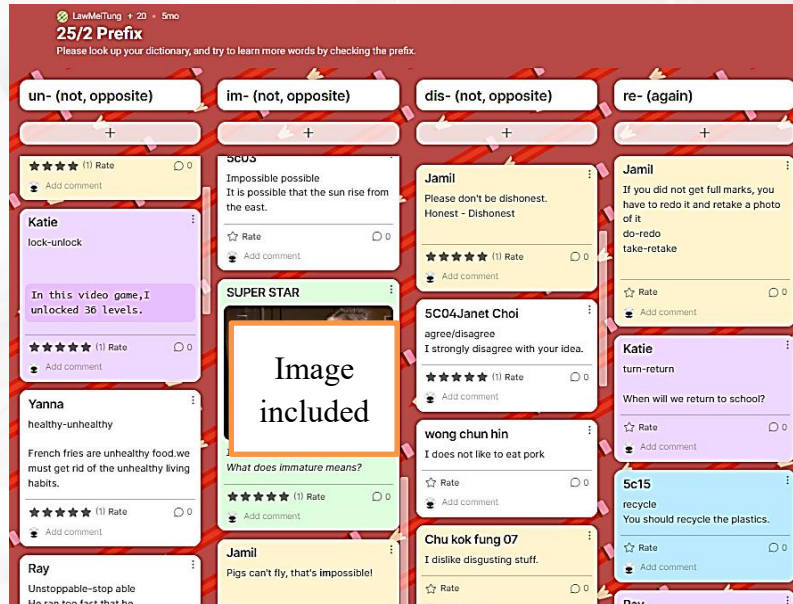
You can get up to 2 marks for each 'juicy' word. You **MUST HIGHLIGHT** the words in your writing to get the Focus Marks.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Tried to use a juicy word and its spelling is correct. |
| 2 | The juicy word is used appropriately and its spelling is correct. |

Assessment rubrics used to encourage students to improve their word choice in writing

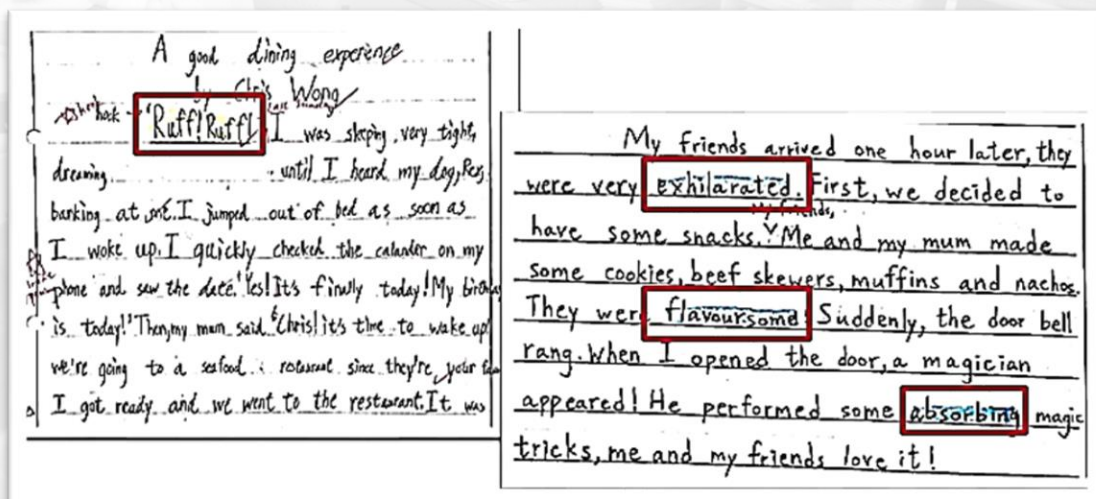
Student level

1. Many students have shown an improvement in making use of the target vocabulary building skills. The majority of them were able to answer the questions on inferring word meaning using contextual clues and understanding unfamiliar words with prefixes, which are essential skills that facilitate students' reading to learn capabilities.



An example of a Padlet created to promote peer learning of prefixes among students

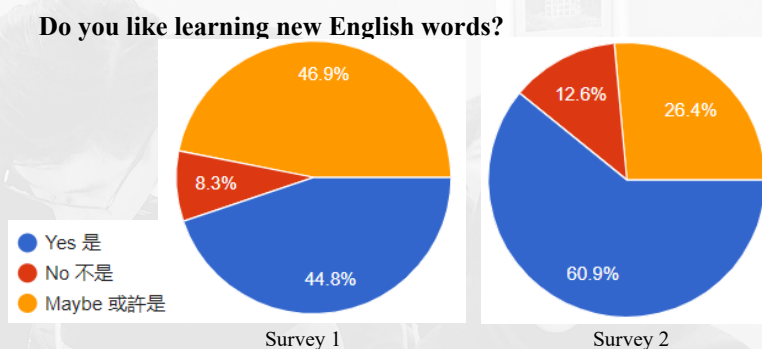
2. Students were also more willing to apply the new words they learnt in writing and speaking, which is an effective strategy to help them retain the new words they learnt.



Samples of writing that illustrates students' efforts in making use of the new words they learnt and the highlighted words are evidence that they were monitoring their own performance

3. Most students were also able to demonstrate a basic mastery of the target self-directed learning skills, which included setting their own learning goals, taking appropriate actions to implement their plans, reflecting on their own performance and making use of the information to further improve their performance in the next phase of the practice.

4. A student survey was conducted at the beginning of the school term and another at the end of it. Students' responses in the two surveys indicated that more students were interested in learning English words after the first year of the programme.



Conclusion

Based on students' performance and their responses in the programme, teachers were encouraged and ready to extend the practices in P4 to P5 and P6 in the coming school years. They would continue to introduce more self-directed vocabulary learning skills in the upper levels systematically and develop their students' interest in learning new words using the same approaches.

Apart from vocabulary learning, teachers planned to incorporate self-directed learning into the reading and writing components in the curriculum. Also, as students have gained more confidence in handling reading texts independently with the skills they acquired in handling unfamiliar words in various contexts, teachers would focus on developing reading to learn capabilities.

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3.12 Promoting a text-based approach to grammar learning and teaching: Towards Reading to Learn

Background

The seven learning goals of primary education focus on promoting the whole-person development of our younger learners (Education Bureau, 2018). These include enhancing students' language proficiency, strengthening their self-directed learning skills, and cultivating in them a habit of reading. Based on this central curriculum framework, the English panel of Kwong Ming Ying Loi School (KMYLS) has worked towards designing and implementing grammar lessons in which reading plays a significant role. One overall goal of this text-based approach to grammar learning and teaching is to nurture lifelong and self-directed learners through Reading to Learn. To this end, the teachers have exposed students to reading and analysing a variety of text types. They have also supported students to discover, understand, and reflect on grammar use in context.

Levels

P4-5

Strategies used

The teachers have employed three key strategies while planning and implementing their school English Language curriculum:

1. Extending grammar learning and teaching from the sentence level to the text level

This involves:

- i. exposing students to reading and analysing a diverse collection of text types (for example, blog entries, newsletters, and personal profiles); and
- ii. exemplifying through repeated structures in context the relationship between forms and functions (for example, how grammar makes meanings in different texts).

2. Adopting an inductive approach to the learning and teaching of text grammar

This involves:

- i. guiding students to explore (through, for example, text comparison, and guided discovery activities) the grammatical features salient to different text types; and
- ii. supporting students to make hypotheses about, and reflect upon, the grammar use in context (for example, how grammatical choices are used as means to shape the tone, style and register of a text).

3. Creating meaningful opportunities for students to reflect on and apply their grammar learning

This involves:

- i. engaging students in practising and using the target grammar items for communication (for example, through creating and presenting relevant texts); and
- ii. integrating the teaching of grammar with the four language skills.

What happened

1. Extending grammar learning and teaching from the sentence level to the text level

Teaching grammar at the text level goes beyond the teaching of isolated grammar rules and terms. By extending grammar learning from the sentence level to the text level, students are enabled to develop a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between language and context (for example, how grammar makes meanings in different texts). To promote the learning and teaching of grammar in context, teachers from KMYLS used reading as an entry point. Through careful planning and adaptation, they developed and guided students to read a diverse collection of text types (see Table 1). Among other things, these reading materials were used to exemplify *in situ* some text-specific grammatical features (for example, the use of comparatives and superlatives in survey reports, and the use of reflexive pronouns in [diary entries](#)).

Levels	Text types	To exemplify the repeated use of...
P4	Survey reports	Comparatives and superlatives
	Blog entries	Adverbs of frequency
	Presentation scripts	Connectives to link similar ideas
	Newsletters	Determiners
	Reports	Questions and phrases of measures
	Proposals	Future forms
P5	Diary entries	Reflexive pronouns
	Guidelines and regulations	Imperatives
	Personal profiles	Present perfect tense
	Magazine articles	Pronouns
	Product sketches	Gerunds and infinitives
	Stories	Participial adjectives

Table 1: Strategic selection of text types

2. Adopting an inductive approach to the learning and teaching of text grammar

To nurture students' "learning to learn" competence, the teachers sought to develop all learners as active explorers of language. This involved considering learning and teaching as a process of enquiry and co-construction (*vis-à-vis* learning as a product of direct instruction, see Education Bureau, 2017). In the context of grammar learning and teaching, students were provided with opportunities to discover language patterns and rules for themselves. Drawing upon a variety of awareness-raising activities (for example, text comparison, and guided discovery), students were supported to: first, note the specific grammatical features of the different text types (*cf.* Table 1), and second, make hypotheses about these forms, alongside their communicative functions (see Figure 1, for example). Through this "inductive and discovery approach" (Curriculum Development Council & Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority, 2021, p. 32), students were guided to consciously reflect upon the grammar use in various contexts. They were also enabled to consolidate and internalise their text grammar knowledge.

3. Creating meaningful opportunities for students to reflect on and apply their grammar learning

Finally, the teachers developed different meaningful tasks for students to interact with the target

language. Together these helped learners reflect on and apply their knowledge of grammar in communication. Meanwhile, students were enabled to bring together the skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. For example, children were asked to [interview their principal](#) in one speaking task. During the process, they needed to consider the form, meaning, and use of different tenses. In addition to playing with the language in such a fun-filled context, students were constantly given the opportunities to demonstrate their text grammar knowledge through creating and editing relevant texts (cf. Table 1). This helps illustrate how the learning and teaching of text grammar could be effective in the context of improving writing skills (Curriculum Development Council, 2004), among other possible objectives.

Read the following paragraph of the biography again. **Circle** the past tense verbs and **underline** the present perfect tense verbs.


Mr Sin has contributed a lot to our school. He formed our school drama team 10 years ago. He wrote the scripts for all the plays our drama team performed in the last 10 years. He also received a reward for outstanding scripts in 2015. However, he has never acted in any of the plays.

Past Tense	Present Perfect Tense
1. The action in the sentence is _____. <input type="checkbox"/> finished <input type="checkbox"/> not finished	1. The action in the sentence is _____. <input type="checkbox"/> finished <input type="checkbox"/> not finished
2. Is there a time reference (e.g. 10 years ago, in 2015)? <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no	2. Is there a time reference (e.g. 10 years ago, in 2015)? <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no
3. We use <i>past tense</i> to talk about... (Circle the correct answer) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a completed action someone did in the past. The exact time the action happened is <u>important</u>. • a completed action someone did in the past. The exact time the action happened is <u>unimportant</u>. • an experience someone has/hasn't had up to the present. • an accomplishment someone has done that continues to affect the present. 	3. We use <i>present perfect tense</i> to talk about... (Circle the correct answer) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a completed action someone did in the past. The exact time the action happened is <u>important</u>. • a completed action someone did in the past. The exact time the action happened is <u>unimportant</u>. • an experience someone has/hasn't had up to the present. • an accomplishment someone has done that continues to affect the present.

Figure 1. Guided discovery activity – An example

**Impact
Student Level**

Based on our ongoing analysis of student work, most learners have demonstrated heightened awareness of how grammar affects the coherence, structure, and tone of a text. Many are now able to choose and use appropriate forms to express different communicative meanings (see, for example, Figure 2). According to the teachers' observations and their formative assessments, many students have demonstrated increased motivation in learning, exploring, and using English



Language. Some were more willing to take risks while performing different communicative tasks (not least as the teachers' pedagogy has shifted from focusing merely on grammatical accuracy, to putting equal emphasis as well on fluency).

Teacher Level

Teachers have begun to see grammar as a “super-connector” in their school English Language curriculum. As was evident in their subject and unit plans, as well as our lesson observations, most teachers were able to integrate the learning and teaching of grammar with the four language skills. In our year-end professional development with all 19 members from the English panel, most teachers agreed (mean score = 4.53/5) that they had gained a better understanding of the theory and practice of promoting a text-based approach to grammar learning and teaching. When asked about building on and sustaining the change we had made, the majority (84%) expressed that they would continue employing similar strategies in their day-to-day teaching. According to the data of our year-end survey with the school, both the principal and the English panel chair agreed that teachers had improved strategies related to the teaching and assessment of text grammar (for example, making good use of student learning evidence for reviewing the effectiveness of grammar learning and teaching).

About Me
 • [Redacted] (9 years old) ✓
 • A Primary 4 student in KMYLS ✓
 • I enjoy ball games ✓ and outdoor activities ✓

My Favourite Hobbies (give a topic and your writing)

Hello! What do you like doing in your spare time? I like playing ball games and outdoor activities ✓ when I am free. Let me tell you more about it.

Football is my favourite hobby. I often play football with my friends after lunch on the football field. I play football five times a week. I like it because it is fun and I can make more friends. Sometimes, we will have a football match. Which team win, they will have some food. I like playing table tennis too. It's interesting. I sometimes play table tennis with my family at night at home. I play it three times a week.

Do we share the same hobbies ✓? Tell me about your favourite. If we share the same hobbies ✓, maybe we can play football or table tennis together.

Labels on the right:
 often
 five times a week
 Sometimes
 sometimes
 three times a week

Figure 2. Using adverbs/adverb phrases to express frequency in a blog entry – A sample of student work

Curriculum Level

First, in extending grammar learning and teaching from the sentence level to the text level, the teachers have introduced into their school English Language curriculum a diverse and appropriate collection of reading texts. These reading inputs, in addition to those from the textbooks, provided a text-rich environment and meaningful contexts for the learning and teaching of grammar. They also offered variety to cater for individual needs, interests and abilities. Second, in employing an inductive approach to the learning and teaching of text grammar, different awareness-raising activities were designed. Furthermore, meaningful opportunities were created for students to reflect on and apply their learning. Together these strategies have put Reading to Learn at the centre of the school English Language curriculum.

Facilitating factors

To conclude this two-year project, some key facilitating factors have been identified:

1. A core team was formed in the first year to develop and pilot this new curriculum initiative. Such a powerful coalition – comprising the English panel chair, the two assistant panel chairs, four English panel members, and the NETs – had met regularly to discuss planning, implementation, and evaluation.
2. This project was partly funded by SCOLAR through the “Grant Scheme on Promoting Effective English Language Learning in Primary Schools” (2020/21). The school had used this source of funding strategically to employ an additional teacher in the first year. In so doing, space was created for the core team members to develop curriculum materials.
3. The teachers have developed the practice of collecting learning and teaching evidence (for example, samples of student work and lesson videos). All data were reviewed regularly to gauge the extent to which the curriculum objectives and success criteria were met.
4. In the second year of the project, the core team was expanded to include all P4 and P5 teachers. By involving all relevant panel members in cycles of planning, implementation, and evaluation, the school was able to further engage everyone in helping implement and sustain the change.

Conclusion

In promoting a text-based approach to grammar learning and teaching, teachers from KMYLS have illustrated how we might nurture lifelong and self-directed learners through Reading to Learn. This was primarily through: first, designing lessons in which reading plays a significant part, and second, providing meaningful opportunities for students to reflect on and apply their learning. While other schools might draw upon different developmental focuses as entry points, the case of KMYLS offers useful insights into optimising the school English Language curriculum to foster students’ whole-person development.

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3.13 Nourishing reflective students into their own assessors through meaningful curriculum integration

Background

In response to the optimisation of the four senior secondary core subjects to foster whole-person development and diverse talents, teachers of Kau Yan College revamped the school English Language curriculum with the space created by the lessons reduced from the senior secondary core subjects. They aim to nourish reflective students into their own assessors by integrating the Compulsory and Elective Parts in the senior secondary curriculum. In the first year, elements of the elective module “Learning English through Poems and Songs” were infused into the Compulsory Part to promote the academic and creative use of English in the S4 school English Language curriculum.

Level
S4

Strategies used

1. Enriching the curriculum by integrating the Compulsory and Elective Parts

To widen students’ exposure to language use, elements of the elective module “Learning English through Poems and Songs” were incorporated into the S4 writing curriculum, in which students were provided with opportunities to explore the creative use of language through thematic incorporation of figurative language devices such as metaphor and triadic structure into relevant textbook units.

2. Infusing self-directed learning (SDL) tasks to develop students into independent writers

With a view to increasing students’ ownership of their learning, SDL tasks were included at the pre-, while- and post-writing stages to help them activate their existing knowledge, set learning goals, expand their knowledge base and skills, evaluate their own work, as well as reflect on the learning process.

3. Adopting differentiated instructional strategies to increase student autonomy

As the S4 students differed in terms of readiness in learning, interest and learning needs, teachers adopted “varied approaches to content, process and product” (Tomlinson, 2001, p.7). A range of measures, such as offering core and extended learning materials, engaging students in group tasks, and allowing students to display their learning through a range of learning outcomes of their own choices in the form of extended tasks, were adopted to cater for their learner diversity and increase learner autonomy.

What happened

The integration of the Elective Part into the Compulsory Part at Key Stage 4 underwent four stages as shown in the diagram (Figure 1) below.

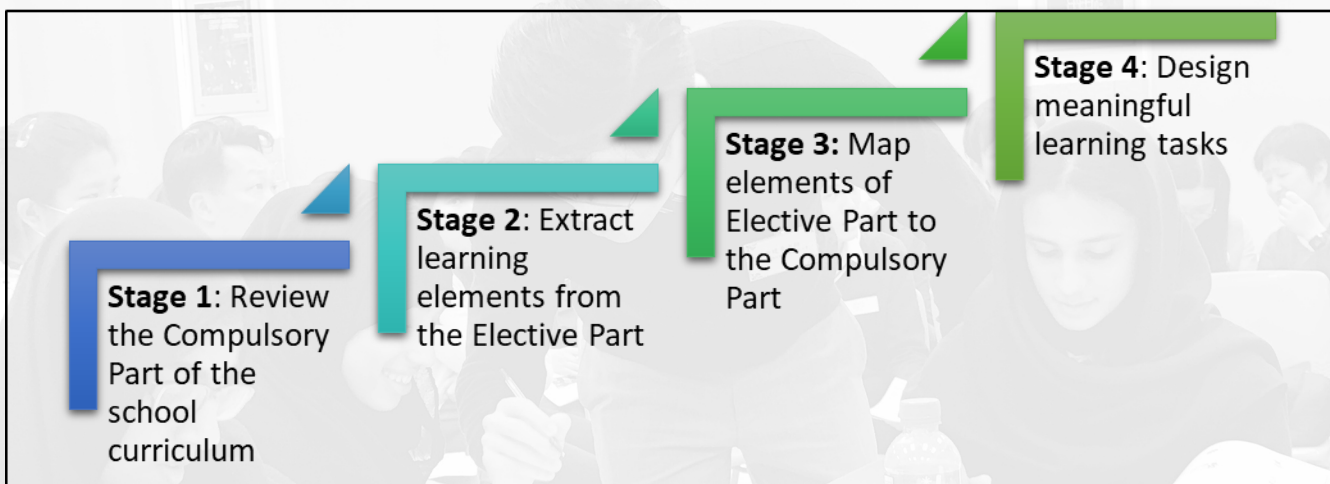


Figure 1 The process of integration of the Compulsory and Elective Parts

Stage 1: Review the Compulsory Part of the school curriculum

To prepare students for Paper 2 Writing Part B question in the 2024 Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education that will be delinked from the elective modules, expanding the coverage of text types was identified as an entry point so as to broaden students’ exposure to different types of writing. With reference to the *English Language Education Key Learning Area Curriculum Guide (Primary 1 – Secondary 6)* (2017), selected text types and writing skills in the Compulsory Part were progressively mapped out across Key Stage 4 (i.e. S4-6) (see the column of “Text types” as shown in [the summary of S4 writing curriculum](#)). For example, to promote the creative use of language, useful strategies and essential teaching elements were adapted from the learning and teaching packages designed for the previous Elective Part on “Learning English through Poems and Songs”, and more challenging text types were recycled at different levels to facilitate progressive writing skills development.

Stage 2: Extract learning elements from the Elective Part

With reference to curriculum documents in relation to “Learning English through Poems and Songs”, teachers identified key teaching focuses from *Learning English through Poems and Songs (Secondary 4-6): A Resource Package* to be mapped into the Compulsory Part so as to achieve the target objectives as stated in the *Suggested Schemes of Work for the Elective Part of the Three-year Senior Secondary English Language Curriculum (Secondary 4-6)*:

Target objectives (extracted from <i>Suggested Schemes of Work for the Elective Part of the Three-year Senior Secondary English Language Curriculum (Secondary 4-6)</i>)	Key teaching focuses (extracted from <i>Learning English through Poems and Songs (Secondary 4-6): A Resource Package</i>)
1. Help students understand the theme, structure, features and language in various poetic forms and songs 2. Understand how moods and feelings are conveyed in poems and songs	1. Appreciating and writing poems 2. Appreciating songs and rewriting lyrics 3. Analysing poetry and songs 4. Responding to poetry

- | | |
|--|--|
| 3. Apply the knowledge and techniques they have learnt in their own creative production or appreciation of poems and songs | |
|--|--|

Stage 3: Map elements of Elective Part to the Compulsory Part

Having the target objectives, text types and elements of “Learning English through Poems and Songs” identified in the previous stages, teachers purposefully mapped the learning and teaching of relevant thematic vocabulary, target language features, writing skills and positive values and attitudes (e.g. commitment and perseverance) into the various themes in the Compulsory Part. In particular, writing skills were recycled in the same module to consolidate students’ learning.

The table below shows an example of the incorporation of language arts elements into a news report writing task in which students needed to report a Spartan Race they participated, stating information about the details of the race and the winners, external factors such as weather, and how these affected racers’ performances. In the learning process, students were provided with opportunities to learn concepts related to the affective aspect of sports through song appreciation, using poetic devices. While all students completed the core tasks, more able students’ learning was stretched through more challenging extended tasks such as rewriting the lyrics of a song (see items marked with *).

Main writing task	Task-specific writing skills	Language features and their communicative functions	Elements of “Learning English through Poems and Songs”
A report on a Spartan Race	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate and make use of given information to complete specific tasks Describe feelings and experiences Write good headlines and leads Use appropriate cohesive devices Use appropriate tone (subjective/objective, *positive/negative), style and register Include authentic quotes to increase reliability of tasks Review specified part of peers’ work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The past tense to talk about events that have finished Direct speech to quote interviewees to increase authenticity Third-person pronouns to establish an objective tone Time markers to show when events happened and in what order 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand the structure and appreciate a narrative poem about swimming Learn poetic device – simile Appreciate the song “Everything at Once” in which similes are used and *rewrite lyrics Understand and appreciate shape poems Create a narrative/shape poem Write a theme song for the Spartan Race to enter the “Sayings of Wisdom Creative (SOW) Singing Contest”

*More challenging tasks for more able students

Stage 4: Design meaningful learning tasks

To provide students with broad and balanced learning experiences and to address school concerns, teachers also developed a series of integrated curriculum frameworks, module plans and sample learning and teaching materials with elements of various curriculum initiatives including assessment as learning, SDL and multimodal literacy skills infused. As a result, a three-phase writing process with learning tasks designed was devised (see Figure 2).

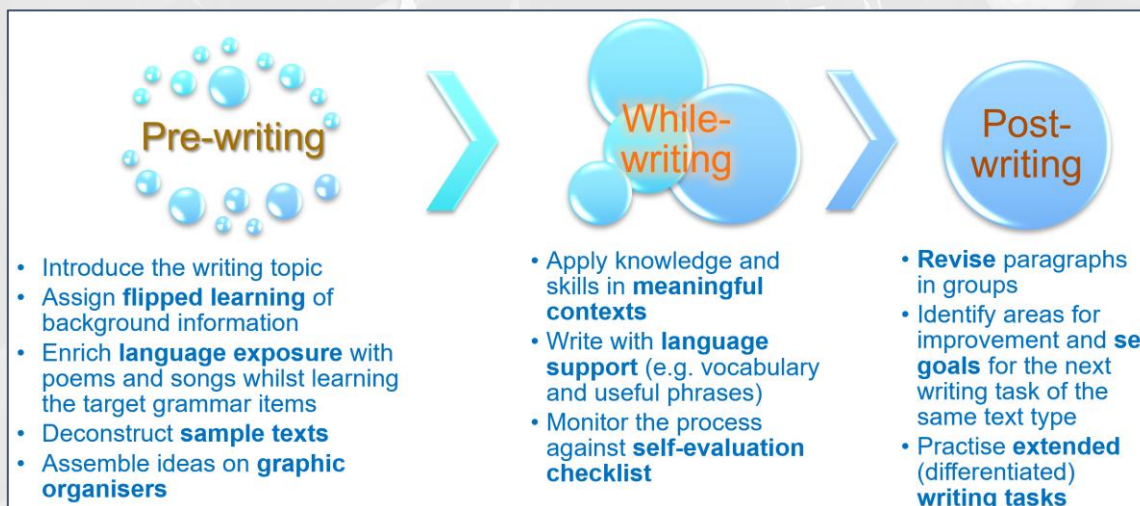
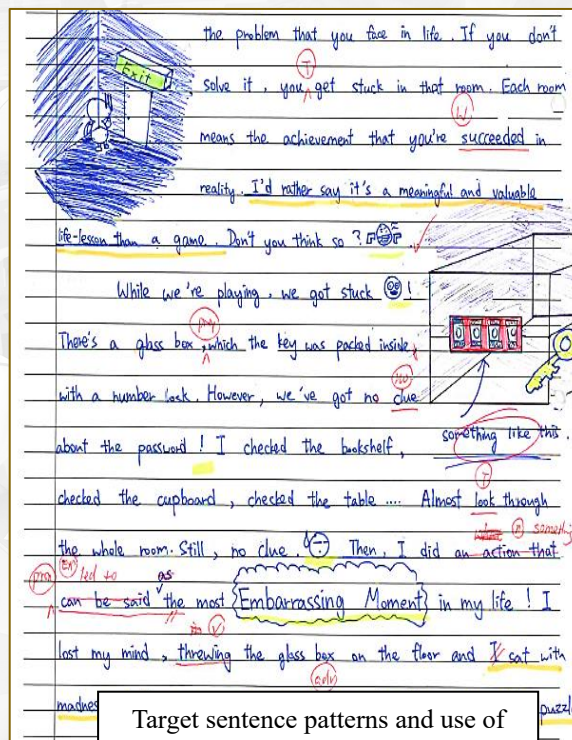


Figure 2 A three-phase writing process with typical learning tasks designed

Meaningful and purposeful learning tasks were planned for the pre-, while- and post-writing stages. After introducing the writing topic, flipped learning of background information was assigned to activate students' prior knowledge. In an [SDL corner](#), core reading texts were assigned for students whilst extended multimodal reading/viewing materials were recommended with identification of levels of text complexity to provide multisensory input. Target writing skills such as writing a hook, using rhetorical devices to persuade readers and producing coherent and cohesive paragraphs were taught to address students' weaknesses. During the while- and post-writing stages, [a self-evaluation checklist](#) was designed for students to monitor whether they had fulfilled the task requirements in terms of content, language and organisation. Having gathered evidence from their own work by highlighting target language features used and that of their peers, they identified challenges they had faced and areas they needed advice on and proposed concrete coping actions to be taken. Hence, they would be able to solve problems arisen when they encounter similar writing tasks in the future. At the post-writing stage, students worked in groups to support one another in polishing example paragraphs with target writing skills such as achieving cohesion and coherence. Students were



Target sentence patterns and use of informal language were highlighted by the student himself/herself.

also offered choices of learning products (e.g. rap/jingle, flyer, video clip) in [an extension task menu](#) to display their learning.

Impact

Curriculum level

The vertical and lateral coherence of the writing curriculum in Key Stage 4 were strengthened after re-mapping of writing topics, text types and writing skills, which also helped reduce curriculum overload. Five writing packages characterised by the progressive development of target writing skills were compiled, namely:

- a blog entry of a day with a celebrity;
- a newspaper report about a Spartan Race;
- a feature article about cyberbullying;
- a one-sided argumentative essay on whether 50 hours of community service should be compulsory; and
- a speech at a public speaking competition.

Essential elements of the elective module “Learning English through Poems and Songs” were incorporated into the Compulsory Part of the curriculum providing students with opportunities for an integrated use of academic and creative English. Transferrable writing skills such as using strong verbs and/or nouns to evoke the reader’s response and adopting similes and metaphors to help readers create mental images for better understanding of ideas suggested in writing tasks in both the Compulsory and Elective Parts were introduced. A spectrum of post-writing activities for students, ranging from creating poems, re-writing lyrics to evaluating peers’ and their own writing products against success criteria, to display their insights gained from the topics were designed. Prominent elements of SDL and values education were incorporated to foster students’ whole-person development. Strategic use of e-learning tools and/or platforms motivated students. It provided a platform for displaying their learning and enabled peer learning. The interface between Key Stages 3 and 4 was also bridged through supplying target reading texts as knowledge input to prepare students for a more skills-based learning approach in Key Stage 4.

Teacher level

Teachers enhanced knowledge of and skills in planning the writing curriculum by designing more scaffolding activities that provided support for students in writing and teaching of text features of different text types. Besides, they developed effective strategies to cater for learner diversity which included:

- adopting colour-coding for visual learners;
- varying levels of difficulty and complexity of reading input; and
- designing a variety of learning products to cater for learner diversity and allowing room for creativity.

Teachers also adopted the following e-learning tools with purposeful use:

- Poll Everywhere enabled students to provide immediate responses anonymously, which offered more security to less confident students;
- Padlet provided a platform for students to share their reflection and evaluate their peers’ learning;
- Shared Microsoft PowerPoint/Google Docs enabled group work which enhanced students’ collaboration and communication skills; and
- Mentimeter was used to collect students’ instant feedback on their prior knowledge in a pre-

lesson task.

A more collaborative culture among English teachers was cultivated through discussions on unit planning, implementation and evaluation. In addition, the panel head demonstrated excellent curriculum leadership capabilities by taking the lead in trying out innovative post-writing tasks and opening lessons for inter-school professional exchanges. Thus, intra- and inter-school learning communities were being established to enhance professional discourse among language teaching practitioners.

Student level

Students' learning experiences were enriched and made more coherent, and the breadth and depth of learning were increased. The use of writing skills, context-specific vocabulary and sophisticated sentence patterns were improved. Students could reflect on their own performance in different areas against the self-evaluation checklist and were able to set realistic and concrete learning goals, implying that they had gained more autonomy in their learning and were able to choose desirable forms of learning products to demonstrate their learning.

Post-Writing Reflection	
After reading the teacher's feedback and comments, what areas have you identified for further improvement? What follow-up actions do you plan?	
Areas of improvement	Actions to be taken
e.g. I haven't included enough reasons and examples for my key arguments.	e.g. I will search the Internet for surveys and articles as to Hong Kong students' problem-solving and self-management skills, as well as check if there are any quotes or comments from the experts on the issue.
Not enough to let the readers think in-depth	I will try to give more example that is close to people's lives and let them easy to understand
There is not enough ex sentences that impresses that readers	Learn more way to write some impressive sentence from internet or ask teacher.

Proposed concrete and specific actions addressing identified areas of improvement

The majority of the students enjoyed the song appreciation task and the group discussion (See Figure 3). Below are some samples of student work.

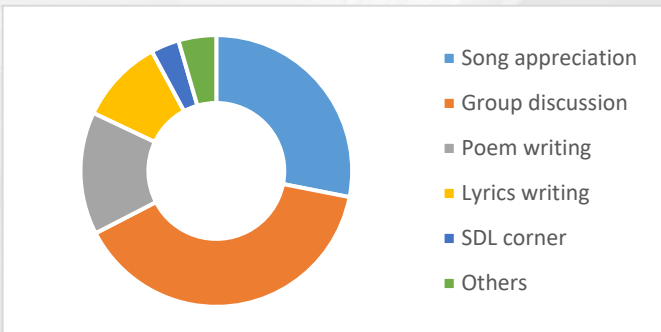



Figure 3 Students' preference on learning tasks

A shape poem representing how contestants overcame an obstacle "fire jump" at the Spartan Race

An album cover designed for the song "Counting Stars"

<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Name of the original song:</td> <td>Stronger by The Score</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Theme of the song:</td> <td>Never Give Up</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Saying quoted:</td> <td>Nothing impossible, the word itself says 'I'm possible.'</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Key message you want to convey:</td> <td>If you don't give up, you can definitely accomplish something, because experiencing the ways and the measures are always more important than solving the problems.</td> </tr> </table>	Name of the original song:	Stronger by The Score	Theme of the song:	Never Give Up	Saying quoted:	Nothing impossible, the word itself says 'I'm possible.'	Key message you want to convey:	If you don't give up, you can definitely accomplish something, because experiencing the ways and the measures are always more important than solving the problems.	<p>[Pre-chorus] Higher, faster, everlasting I'll stand up and try that's what I believe Higher, faster, never-crashing I'll stand up and try that's what I believe</p> <p>[Chorus] Stronger When I fall When I fall I'll stand up and try Stronger I'll stand up and try that's what I believe</p>	
Name of the original song:	Stronger by The Score									
Theme of the song:	Never Give Up									
Saying quoted:	Nothing impossible, the word itself says 'I'm possible.'									
Key message you want to convey:	If you don't give up, you can definitely accomplish something, because experiencing the ways and the measures are always more important than solving the problems.									

An excerpt of lyrics rewritten for the song “Stronger”

A shot from a video clip of a student presenting an application designed to stop cyberbullying

Students’ ownership and confidence in learning was increased. From group re-writing of draft paragraphs, they were confident in revising their own draft to improve their articulation of the content points, thereby paving the way to become more independent writers.

<p>Lack of self-management and problem-solving skills stem from Hong Kong teens are too pampered and spoilt by their parents. Community services organised by the schools for the other Learning experience is one of solution of required problem which requiringh senior secondary students undertaking 50 hours of it. In the whole world,community service become a trend and common,is time to start this in Hong Kong. Will it be succeed in Hong Kong ?Do you think it is good trend in Hong Kong ?In my opinion,the both answers are absolute yes.</p>	<p>Community service voluntary work intended to help people in a particular area. Lack of self-management and problem-solving skills stem from Hong Kong teens are too pampered and spoilt by their parents. Imagine a child have not face to do the community service,he will not know any skill for taking of elderly,he do not have any concept on serving the community,do not have any positive value. In the whole world,community service become a trend and common,is time to start this in Hong Kong. Will it be succeed in Hong Kong ?Do you think it is good trend in Hong Kong ?In my opinion,both answers are absolute yes because of the positive effect it brings to us.</p>	<p>Definition</p> <p>Anecdote</p> <p>Scenario</p> <p>Rhetorical Questions</p> <p>Thesis statement</p>
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This student improved his original draft (leftmost column) and rewrote a new version (middle column) with structural elements in the rightmost column.

Conclusion

Facilitating factors

The team of curriculum leaders, including the vice principal, panel head, assistant panel head and a novice teacher was supportive to the curriculum development project. While the panel head shared the clear objectives and planning for integrating the Elective Part into the Compulsory Part with relevant parties of the school, the senior management created space for the English panel to form a powerful coalition in its implementation based on the school context and students’ diverse learning needs through (1) allowing English teachers to participate in a series of curriculum leadership workshops, (2) arranging these teachers to take up relevant S4 classes, and (3) setting aside common block lessons for the teachers concerned to conduct co-planning meetings. This indicates that the development of the school curriculum does not only require the effort of subject panels, but also the effective planning and allocation of human and time resources.

Way forward

To optimise the senior secondary English Language curriculum with the reduced lesson time as recommended by the Task Force on Review of School Curriculum, English teachers are advised to

strategically map relevant elements in the Elective Part into the Compulsory Part with a view to enriching students' learning experiences and providing them with broad and balanced coverage of knowledge, skills and positive values and attitudes. To sustain the benefits brought by the change, such mapping will also be conducted for S5-6 in the coming years, with learning elements of other elective modules being incorporated into specific modules so as to increase students' breadth and depth of learning in Key Stage 4.

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