

**Promoting assessment *for* and *as* learning at the senior secondary level:
Focusing on the development of writing skills
An Exemplar**

Introduction

This exemplar focuses on how assessment *as* learning could be built on the good practice of assessment *for* learning and implemented in schools to improve students' writing performance.

This exemplar illustrates how teachers engage students in assessment *as* learning to improve their writing skills through:

- appreciation of good sample student work;
- self-reflection and goal-setting;
- self-monitoring of learning progress; and
- self-evaluation.

Assessment *as* learning require active engagement of students in connecting assessment to learning through acquiring and applying a range of metacognitive skills including self-reflection and monitoring skills. Support from teachers is crucial in the initial stage to help students develop the capacity to review, plan and improve their own learning. Teacher support is expected to reduce gradually to enable learners to take full responsibility for advancing in learning.

Background

The learning activities were tried out in a co-educational school located on Hong Kong Island with mostly students whose English level was above average. They were generally eager to improve their English but rely on teachers' input and support to a large extent.

Planning Stage**➤ Creation of a favourable learning environment**

The following factors were taken into consideration in planning the tryouts. Arrangements were made to create a favourable learning environment conducive to the development of an "assessment *as* learning" culture among the teacher and students.

- the teacher's understanding of assessment for and as learning and her readiness in helping students to develop metacognitive skills;
- students' readiness to acquire metacognitive skills to conduct self-directed learning to improve their writing skills;
- the positive class and school culture in supporting students to conduct self-assessment and self-evaluation;
- students' prior learning experience in assessment *for* learning / formative assessment (e.g. understanding of success criteria for individual writing task, teachers' feedback on their strengths and weaknesses in writing, suggestions for making improvement); and
- the school-based curriculum plan and current practice on the development of writing skills.

➤ **Development of writing tasks**

- Based on the school-based curriculum plan on developing students' writing skills, students were guided to appreciate the good qualities of sample student work to encourage them to reflect on their previous writing, set goals and propose actions to improve their own writing.
- Three writing assessment tasks were designed to create opportunities for students to apply the self-monitoring and self-evaluation skills in their learning process and at the end of the tryout period. Each writing task has a separate assessment rubric including the success criteria on content, language and skills for teacher's assessment, students' self- and peer-assessment.
- For details of the three writing tasks, tryout activities and assessment rubrics please refer to *Appendix I*.

➤ **Implementation of tryout activities**

- Teachers could flexibly arrange the period for implementation of assessment as learning to cover students' self-reflection of previous writing and self-assessment of learning goal attainment in a number of writing tasks to be completed. For example, the period could span from a school term to a school year to allow ample time for students to practise the metacognitive skills involved in improving their writing.

Part 1: Appreciation of Good Sample Student Work, Self-reflection and Goal-setting

| Learning and Teaching Process | Impact on Learning |
|---|--|
| <p>The teacher</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ selects good sample student writing and explains the strengths with textual evidence; and ➤ demonstrates, in a think-aloud mode, how to appreciate good sample student writing by focusing on the best parts on the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content (e.g. presentation of arguments with sound evidence, providing sensible suggestions, giving precise and concise background information, using anecdotes for illustration, etc.) • Organisation (e.g. using eye-catching and specific sub-headings, using effective topic and concluding sentences, etc.); and • Language and style (e.g. using rhetorical questions to enhance presentation, using visual images and persuasive language, etc.) <p><i>(Refer to Appendix II Appreciation of Good Sample Student Work)</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students are motivated to read and learn from the outstanding writing produced by their peers in a supportive learning environment and culture. • Students develop their language and critical thinking skills to appreciate and analyse the outstanding writing in terms of content, organisation, and language and style. • Students learn metacognitive skills through teacher’s demonstration in the learning process. |
| <p>The teacher</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ guides students to review their own writing assignments recently completed and the comments and feedback from their teacher; ➤ helps students to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses in writing and identify their learning needs; ➤ supports students to formulate personalised learning goals on content, organisation, and language and style and propose possible actions for each; and <p><i>(Refer to Appendix III Self-Reflection and Goal-setting)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ provides constructive feedback to students on the appropriateness of the learning goals and the feasibility of the proposed actions to facilitate students’ revision of their learning goals and actions. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students take ownership of their own learning by being motivated to identify their own learning needs and propose action to improve their weaknesses. • Students develop and practise their metacognitive skills through expressing their thoughts and analysis in writing and revising their plans to incorporate feedback from their teacher. |

Part 2: Self-evaluation during the Learning Process

| Learning and Teaching Process | Impact on Learning |
|--|--|
| <p>The teacher</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ encourages students of the need to step up their efforts to take actions in order to attain their learning goals, especially during the pre-writing and while-writing stages; ➤ provides opportunities for students to evaluate the attainment of their learning goals and the effectiveness of the proposed actions in attaining the goals in the post-writing stage; and ➤ supports students to formulate further actions to improve their writing skills if necessary. <p><i>(Refer to Appendix IV Progress Chart)</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-directed learning takes place when learners keep track of their process of learning at different stages. • The use of graphic organisers helps students visualise their own evaluation of their attainment of learning goals and effectiveness of the proposed actions. The visual representation also gives students a sense of success and satisfaction in their achievement or a reminder to take further action. |

Part 3: Overall Evaluation

| Learning and Teaching Process | Impact on Learning |
|--|--|
| <p>The teacher</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ guides students to evaluate their overall attainment of learning goals and the effectiveness of their actions, reflect on problems encountered and actions taken to overcome them, and plan for further actions to make improvement; and ➤ provides constructive feedback including acknowledgement of effort made, observation of the learning process and attainment of learning goals and encouragement for making new plans to improve learning. <p><i>(Refer to Appendix V Overall Self-evaluation)</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students develop the skills and confidence in assessing their own strengths and weaknesses and a positive attitude towards improving their language skills. • A growth mindset, which advocates that success can be achieved through making appropriate effort, is promoted among students to empower them to take ownership to improve their own learning. |

The activities have been tried out in St Mark's School. We thank the school for sharing their experience and students' work.

Implementation of tryout activities

| | Theme/Module | Text-type | Role of writer | Target Reader | Purpose | Communicative Function and Language Style |
|-------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|---|-----------------------|---|---|
| April 14 | · Appreciation of Good Sample Student Work, Self-reflection and Goal-setting | | | | | |
| April 14 Writing No. 6 | Learning English through Popular Culture | A school magazine article | A journalist | Students and teachers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To respond to the passage entitled “Music and Movies now on the Move – too fast for some?”; • To explain the impact of new technologies like MP3 players, tablets and smartphones on entertainment and how they affect the interaction within a family; and • To express personal views and give an appropriate title for the article | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To adopt a semi-formal tone to discuss the issue; • To use appropriate expressions and sentence structures to compare and contrast ideas; • To use appropriate tense to present facts and ideas; and • To use rhetorical strategies to catch the readers’ attention |
| April 14 | · Self-evaluation during the Learning Process | | | | | |
| May 14 Writing No. 7 | Learning English through Workplace Communication | A letter of appeal for donation | A staff member in an NGO serving a specific disadvantaged group | General public | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To briefly introduce the organisation, its mission and vision; • To state the purpose for raising funds and how the funds raised would be used; and • To explain why readers should support the organisation and the benefits of donation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To adopt a polite and friendly tone to appeal for donation; • To use appropriate expressions and sentence structures to state objectives and benefits, and show cause and effect; • To use appropriate tenses to present facts and ideas; and • To use rhetorical strategies to persuade the readers |
| May 14 | · Self-evaluation during the Learning Process | | | | | |

| | Theme/Module | Text-type | Role of writer | Target Reader | Purpose | Communicative Functions and Language Style |
|-----------------------------|---|------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|---|--|
| May 14 Writing No. 8 | Learning English through Debating | A blog entry | A debater | Friends | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To describe what happened at the grand final of the Inter-class Debating Contest; • To comment on how the teams performed and the arguments they put forward; and • To reflect on the experience and the importance of debating skills in life. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To adopt a personal tone in recounting the event and expressing one's feelings; and • To use appropriate expressions and sentence structures to describe the debate contest, the arguments put forward by the teams, the debaters' performance and the benefits of debating and to reflect on the experience. |
| June 14 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-evaluation during the Learning Process • Overall Evaluation | | | | | |

Sample Student Work for Appreciation

| Marks | |
|-----------|---------|
| Content | 30 / 40 |
| Accuracy | 28 / 33 |
| Treatment | 28 / 33 |
| Total | 86 |

| Marking Symbols | Ag - Agreement | Pr - Preposition | W - Word Form | V - Verb Form | T - Tense |
|-----------------|----------------|---------------------|---------------|----------------------|-----------|
| | Ar - Article | CW - Choice of Word | Sp - Spelling | A/P - Active/Passive | |

Date: 20th February, 2014

Composition 5 Catching Any alternative?

Classic Words Sung for (the Industrious/ly working Hongkongers)

What immediately gets into your nerves whenever you think about the city's culture? The famous food? Or, the blend of ~~the~~ Oriental and Western in whatever aspects? To me, it is rather the spirit of the ^Ncitizen, the spirit to endure hardships, work hard, and strive for excellence, making Hong Kong one of the best cities worldwide. A song from half a century ago probably reflects such a commendable spirit.

With words from the talented composer James Wong and arranged by Joseph Ko, 'Striving Hard' was first released in the 1960s. Sung by the famous vocalist Roman Tam, it was popularized all over a night. Currently, it still strikes chord with a ^{lot} of ^{today's} Hongkongers' minds with the

Well done! vivid introduction of the features!

Overall Comment:

recording broadcasted in a great deal of online channels.

Such a classical masterpiece kicks off with the words:
 'Regardless of how many waves crushing by,

Regardless of how many stormy days in our life,

- strive to find ways out that get all of us to the side across the ocean ...'

The song then ^{Am}continue to describe different hardships in life,

while echoing the main theme of the song that they can all be overcome with determination and persistence. Yes, it

is the spirit shared among all Hong Kong citizens - Work Hard and

Never Give Up. Written at the ^{prep}1950s, when the economy of the city started developing, the majority of the population has to

work arduously day by day so as to make a living. For instance, working

as factory workers that face enormous workload. They are simply as

good as slaves. These days are ^{undoubtedly} without a doubt hard and

full of agony, while such an inspiring song sung by

Roman Tam with his encouraging tone encouraged Hongkongers

to carry on till tomorrow and believe that their hard

work would pave them the road to a better life. Yes, they

did. Today Hong Kong has become the ^{most} most developed cities, and

is renowned as the financial centre of Asia, or ^{virtually} the

globe.

I truly appreciate the lyrics of the classical songs that

| Marks | |
|-----------|--|
| Content | |
| Accuracy | |
| Treatment | |
| Total | |

| Marking Symbols | Ag - Agreement | Pr - Preposition | W - Word Form | V - Verb Form | T - Tense |
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Date: 20th February, 2014.

motivates citizens in the hard days. It truly reflects the culture of the city that all the citizens are hard working, making contributions to promote the betterment of Hong Kong, even at this very moment. In fact, not only does it apply to the old days, but rather, every ^{sp} instant in our life. As a high school student, this song reminds me of how our past generations have worked ^{hard} to build such a great city, and there's no reasons for us to give up easily upon challenges faced in studies. After all, it is invariably an encouraging song that heals your tired soul, and I truly believe that if we have the determination to strive for the best and work hard like all citizens, we are, as the lyrics says, 'not far from the blissful and happy Utopia!'

Remarks

Bravo!
Excellent!
It's a convincing introduction with substantial realog points to highlight the unique culture of H.K.

Overall Comment:

Sample Student Work

Activity 1: Appreciation of Good Sample Student Work

In this activity, I will

- appreciate two good pieces of writing and understand their good qualities.

1. What do I like best about the sample work? Why?

The use of **rhetorical questions** → get the readers thinking / realizing something.
 Food for thought in the conclusion →
 elaboration on the ideas (e.g. how anecdotes related to the internship programme)
 ↳ readers can know more about the details
 Descriptive language → precise and concise → readers can know what you mean immediately.

2. What would I like to learn from my classmates' outstanding work?

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| Content | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Presentation of arguments with sound evidence (p.1 para 2) - Giving sensible suggestions (Consider reality, practicality) (p.2 para 4) - Food for thought in a conclusion (p.2 para 5) - Giving precise and concise background information (p.3 para 1) - elaboration on ideas (p.5 para 2-3) - Use of anecdotes to enrich content |
| Organisation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Eye-catching — sub-headings - coherence (p.5 para 2-3) |
| Language and style | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use of rhetorical question to enhance persuasion (p.1 para 3) - Showing contrast : feel indifferent to , enjoy and support. (p.2 para 5) - Use of visual imagery (P.1 para 3) - Inversion : Not only... but also ... - Persuasive language — highlighting the benefits (p.4) - Quotation + interpretation (p.4) - Showing Interest , paying tribute - Descriptive language — precise and concise self introduction |

Read the task instructions a few times before doing it

Plan the task

Search for relevant information if applicable.

Proofread work.

Activity 2: Self-reflection and Goal-setting

In this activity, I will:

- study three writing assignments I completed previously and the comments from my teacher;
- reflect on my strengths and weaknesses;
- reflect on the comments from my teacher; and
- set my learning goals and suggest actions for improving my writing skills by the end of this school term.

1. What have I accomplished in my earlier writing assignments?

- Using of a wider range of vocab
 - Attempt to use conversion and different sentence patterns

2. Taking into consideration comments from my teacher, what are the areas for improvement?

- Practise my fluency
 - use a wider ranged of vocabulary and sentence pattern
 - The content should be more precise and concise

3. What learning goals can I set to improve my writing skills by the end of this school term?
 What possible actions can I take to attain these goals? *comment & set goals*

| Areas for improvement | Learning goals | Proposed actions |
|-----------------------|--|---|
| content less precise | Goal 1 (Content) - use thesis statement to outline the content - Elaborate the point with more evidence, news and personal experience | - Concluded the passage with a topic sentence - Explain views with evidence - Read more newspaper |

| | | |
|--------------|---|--|
| Language | Goal 2 (Language and Style) - Convincing & Persuasive tone | - Read different styles of article |
| Organization | Goal 3 (Organisation) - Use connective devices / topic sentence / sentence structures | - Revise the vocabulary book and the 300 phrases |

- Comp 2 : A letter to the Editor → present arguments with evidence
 3 : Leaflet: An Elderly Home visit → persuasive / descriptive
 4 : Application letter → persuasive / descriptive
 → combination of tenses

Appendix III

Progression chart

| Learning goals | Proposed actions | My progress in writing 1 <small>compo 6</small> Colour your achievement of learning goals. | My progress in writing 2 <small>compo 7</small> Colour your achievement of learning goals. | My progress in writing 3 <small>compo 8</small> Colour your achievement of learning goals. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| <p>Goal 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use more evidence, statistic, news article, personal experiences to support my ideas and content | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Read more Times magazine and English newspaper such as Standard and SCMP - Read more English books with different genres instead of just fiction | | | |
| <p>Goal 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use a wider range vocabulary & sentence structure - Examples: Inversion, Imagery, Rhetorical question | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Read the vocabulary notebook and notes more often - Read more English books, newspaper, magazines, movies and documentaries | | | |
| <p>Goal 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establish better cohesion between paragraphs - Set an eye-catching and comprehensive title | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Read more news articles and news commentaries - Read more sample essay and different styles of articles such as letter | | | |

| | My progress in writing 1 Colour your achievement of learning goals. | My progress in writing 2 Colour your achievement of learning goals. | My progress in writing 3 Colour your achievement of learning goals. |
|--|--|--|---|
| | <p>Self-reflection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I am not working hard enough to read those news article and to learn a wider variety and higher level of vocabulary. - There may be some irrelevant information in the passage. | <p>Self-reflection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The description of how the donation will be used is not specific enough. - More points can be added in the practical measures | <p>Self-reflection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Time management should be improved as the part about the importance of debating skills in one's life was not mentioned comprehensively and deeply. - The performance of the two classes can be more precise and concise, need to mention about the floor speakers as well. - Background of the adjudicators should be provided. |

Appendix IV

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Activity 4: Overall Self-evaluation

In this activity, I will

- evaluate the overall attainment of my learning goals and the effectiveness of the proposed actions in attaining the goals;
- reflect on the overall effectiveness of my plan to improve writing skills; and
- plan for the next stage.

1. How well have I achieved the set learning goals and carried out the proposed plan?

Some of plans are not actually carried out, for examples, I plan to read more commentaries and magazines originally, but it turns out that I didn't do it. Yet, I also read through my vocabulary notes more frequently in which a wider range of words can be used.

2. What problems have I encountered in the process and how did I overcome them?

The major problems are about the time management. Most of the time I do not have enough time to complete the composition which the content is not finished thoroughly. The planning before writing the composition can be improved.

3. List two ways I think I have developed or grown as a result of this plan for improving writing skills?

I have developed to be more selective about the content. A lot of things can be written in the composition, however, I learnt to be selective which only includes the important stuff. I also learnt to use more cohesive devices and topic sentence to improve the connection between paragraphs.

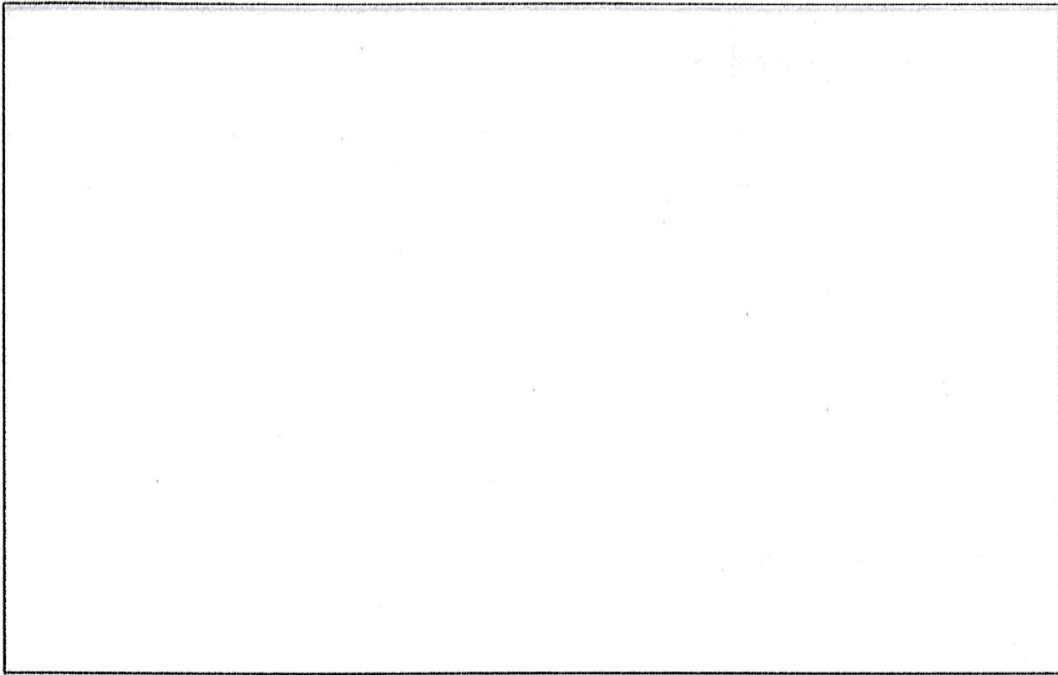
4. What am I still not sure about and need advice on?

I need advice on the language about how to use more phrases and different inversion patterns to improve my delivery in the composition.

5. What am I going to work on or improve next?

I will work on the better time management and better preparation or planning works before starting the composition. Furthermore, I will also have to read more sample essays and learn the good things about them, for example, how others illustrated the performances of the debaters in Compo 8 and bring out the food for thought about the importance of debating.

6. Response from my teacher:



skills in one's life.