

NET

SCHEME NEWS

2020 Summer
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Online
Teaching



Audio Book



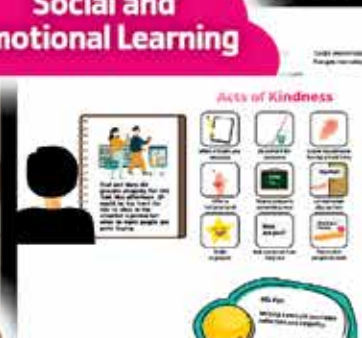
Home
Learning



Storytelling

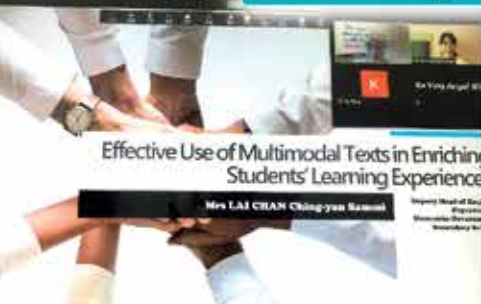


Social and
Emotional Learning



Online
Learning

Interacting with
Students in Cyberspace



Reinventing Learning
in Challenging Times



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Reinventing Learning in Challenging Times

As education professionals, we have been going through severely trying times as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. At a time when face-to-face interaction with and among our students is becoming a rarity, we have to keep exploring means of supporting, enabling and sustaining learning. With months of trial and error, we are expanding our repertoire to 'reinvent' learning and 'reengage' with our students. By tapping into the power of technology, we are defying the confines of time and space and creating virtual learning environments and experiences. By collaborating with our peers, we are supporting each other's learning and developing skills in using new or hybrid approaches to teaching. Reflecting on the experiences that we have acquired so far, we should be pleased to see our creativity, problem-solving capabilities and sense of community thriving as we respond with positivity to the threat that the virus is posing to us.

This issue of the NET Scheme News is about the above experiences that we have had on this testing journey of reinventing learning. Thanks to the contributions from different community partners under the Scheme, we have a collection of intriguing stories about how learning is made possible and sustainable through our collaborative effort in these challenging times.

The power of technology is one of the central themes of the stories shared. With the use of e-learning apps and platforms, our teacher contributors find themselves better equipped to collaborate with their peers and engage with their students. Apart from supporting and monitoring learning online, in the words of Jason Kasseris, the NET at Homantin Government Secondary School, the use of technology provides "an organic and fluid workflow" and a "liberating" experience for both students and teachers. Celebrating the timelessness of online platforms, Tom Underwood, the NET at Queen Elizabeth School Old Students' Association Branch Primary School, presents to us a promising picture of how online learning contributes to the creation of "an evolutionary library where acquired knowledge is recorded and stored." To our resourceful frontline partners, the challenge of supporting learning during the pandemic opens up opportunities for developing novel solutions. One such novelty is 'Home Learning Heroes', a *YouTube* channel developed from scratch by Donald Elkins, the NET at Queen Elizabeth School Old Students' Association Primary School, to support the implementation of Space Town, a NET Section's literacy programme for KS1.

While we can learn a lot from our tech-savvy contributors, the experiences shared by those who consider themselves beginners are equally

enlightening. "The natural interaction among students shows me once again that learning can happen in many unpredictable ways." This is an observation made by Mrs Sammi Lai, Mr Kasseris' colleague, as she ventured into using *Zoom* and integrating *Nearpod* and *Poll Everywhere* to engage students in an array of online learning activities.

While reportedly most students are taking to learning in virtual environments, some are giving more thought to how they can make the most of their online learning experiences. One such student is Pradhan Samantha Simran, an S1 student at Tak Nga Secondary School, who has "designed a schedule to keep (herself) disciplined" so that she can benefit more from online learning. Understandably our students have diverse needs and preferences. The candid feedback from students like Ivan Chu, an S4 student at Homantin Government Secondary School who reflects that he feels lonely and misses the interaction he used to have with classmates and teachers, should be heeded.

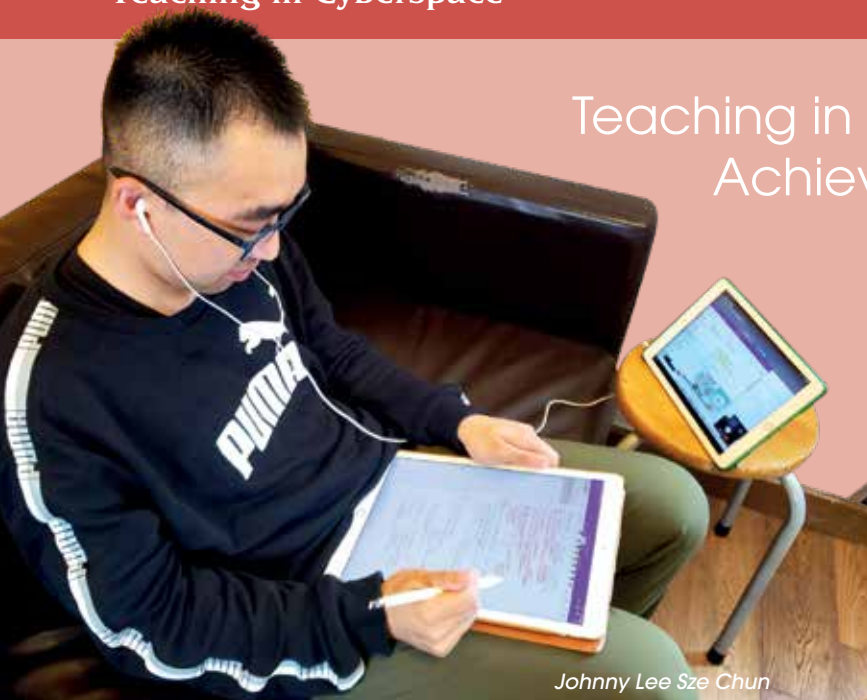
Apart from employing different means of supporting schools during the class suspension period, our Advisory Teachers (ATs) and Regional NET Coordinators (RNCs) in the NET Section have been actively contributing to the system-wide effort to support learning. Inspired by the findings of the online school survey administered in February on how the English panel and their NET supported student learning, we have formed special task groups comprising ATs and RNCs to produce resources that serve to promote personal hygiene, social and emotional learning (SEL), home learning and family literacy. Thanks to the fabulous teamwork, an English audio picture book on 'Together We Fight the Virus', an SEL resource page and three storytelling videos have been uploaded to the NET Scheme e-Platform at <https://nets.edb.hkedcity.net/news.php>. More storytelling videos will be produced in the 2020/21 school year and a "Seed" project on integrating SEL with English language learning is currently being planned.

The lingering uncertainty that comes with the virus threat is one of the biggest challenges facing us. In these testing times, the best that we can do as guardians of our students' well-being is to stay positive, strong and well. Let's be each other's inspiration!



**Joe Leung, Chief Curriculum Development Officer,
NET Section**

Teaching in Cyberspace - Achieving the Unimaginable



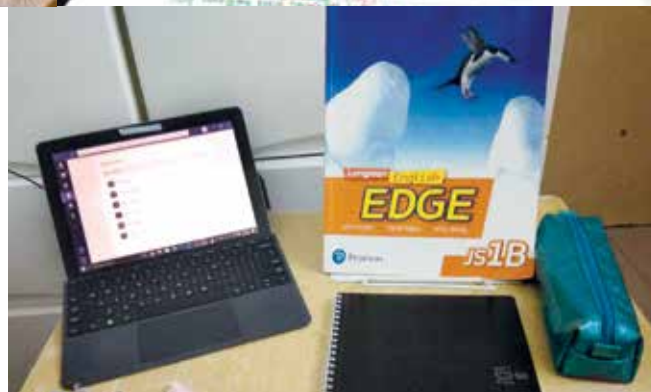
Johnny Lee Sze Chun



Keeping the disruption of learning to a minimum has been our school's greatest concern during the COVID-19 pandemic. Thankfully, our experiences during such a turbulent time are being overcome with inspirational solutions from learning communities in the context of 21st century learning and teaching. With the dedicated efforts of many, I am sure there is a silver lining ahead of us. Let me share our story with you.

Neither Rome nor a virtual campus was built in a day. At our school, e-learning arrangements have been launched phase by phase for our students and team to adapt themselves to distant learning. In phase one, the English Panel designed online self-directed learning tasks to keep students engaged. In one of the tasks, students had to take notes after watching selected grammar videos on *Schoology*. Through the submission, students' acquisition of knowledge in certain topics could be demonstrated in order to give us a basis to start designing our lessons in phase two. Meanwhile, the concept of virtual learning could be instilled in students. After that, we started conducting live lessons using *Microsoft Teams*. In addition to offering feedback, we tried to make use of different apps to interact with students and facilitate peer learning, for example, *Padlet*, *Kahoot*, *Quizlet* and *Edpuzzle*. As students became acquainted with learning online, they were required to submit their assignments and undergo assessments through e-learning platforms like *Class Notebook* and *Microsoft Form*, further transforming the classroom into a virtual space.

Sophisticated planning and a well-thought-out implementation go hand in hand. As newbies to live lessons, teachers of all levels have to become acquainted with breakthroughs. In light of that, meetings of all levels, ranging from staff to form meetings, are conducted using *Microsoft Teams*, to expose teachers to the interface and functions of the app as hosts and participants. Through experiential



Getting ready for online lessons

learning, our confidence of mastering the app was greatly enhanced. Meanwhile, we could experience the potential difficulties encountered by the participants and thereby come up with corresponding solutions. Admittedly, not everyone is tech-savvy, and it is a sense of unity which lets us offer timely assistance to one another. At panel level, a collaborative culture encourages us to share useful online materials, ranging from local and international online resources to successful implementation of live lessons in other schools, as well as to plan and evaluate live lessons in different forms on a regular basis. A noteworthy point is that we started our live lessons from S1, which are taught by both the junior panel chairperson and me so that we can share our experience after piloting. The IT team has been supporting us by providing round-the-clock technological support, regular updates of the latest functions offered by the app, live lesson demonstration, migrating the subject drive online, etc. It is the collaborative culture which we have long been building that has allowed us to get through technical frustrations.

Given the complexity and huge number of stakeholders, clear school policy is an integral component of a successful launch. For instance, it is necessary to

have clear guidelines on participation, assignment submission, assessments, and follow-up with parents for all subjects, which mean easier adaptation for students. They also offer an initial platform for the exchange of pedagogical ideas between various panels. In retrospect, it is fortunate that our school started incorporating e-learning elements in different subjects a few years ago and chose this as one of our major concerns in recent years. In other words, information technology has become an integral part of our daily learning and teaching. In particular, the 'Bring Your Own Device' (BYOD) policy in our school brings convenience in terms of facilitating learning progress and performance, lesson delivery, offering feedback and follow-up. Different measures were rolled out based on our school's focuses such as collaborating with the NET Section on a "Seed" project, planning and implementing lesson study cycles, trying out e-learning strategies and training offered by colleagues in our school. Thankfully, these measures have all built a solid ground for further advancement of learning and teaching in the virtual space.

Despite the unprecedented challenges, it is great to see students' learning opportunities being opened up with the progressive launch of live lessons adopting the whole-school approach against the backdrop of 21st century learning and teaching. I would like to end this article with a quote from Oscar Wilde shared by Dr Paul Sze, one of the leading experts in the e-learning field:



Live lessons are interesting as they mean I can see my classmates and teachers more often. Online games like Kahoot and Padlet are quite interesting. Live lessons also mean I am accompanied a lot during the hard times. Sometimes if I can't finish assignments or don't know how to use some functions of Teams, I will ask teachers and they usually respond to me super quickly. Of course, I miss my classmates and want to go back to the classroom as soon as possible.

Zoe Chiu, 1D

"We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars". For the time being, we hope the faces and responses from students, albeit intangible, sustain all teachers' enthusiasm until they can greet their students without masks.

**Johnny Lee Sze Chun, English Panel Chair,
Tak Nga Secondary School**



My experience with online classes is great. I had some difficulties like being unable to hear the teacher properly at the beginning, but other than that, I had a great time with the online classes. However, there are fewer temptations with real classes. Online classes mean a lot of devices, like my mobile or tablet, are by my side. To strengthen my determination, I have designed a schedule to keep me disciplined.

Pradhan Samantha Simran, 1C



I think online lessons are more difficult than face-to-face ones. Sometimes if the Internet connection is unstable or there are some technical problems, you will have to report them to teachers immediately. Fortunately, teachers usually solve the problem and I am able to continue with my learning. Although learning in cyberspace is challenging, it's a fun new experience!

Jade Wong, 1D



The outbreak of COVID-19 is a global crisis and we have not seen the end of it yet. We have been experiencing the longest class suspension in history. All schools have the same mission - 'Suspending Classes Without Suspending Learning'. This challenge, intriguingly, has been a catalyst for the implementation of e-learning in our school. With the implementation of the Fourth Strategy on IT in Education (ITE4) in 2015/16, our school was provided with a wireless network and mobile computing devices. Teachers and students have been exposed to new possibilities of learning and teaching. The implementation of BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) in 2019/20 in S1 has proved that mobile learning is an effective way to enhance classroom interaction and to promote assessment for learning. e-Learning has become indispensable during this period of class suspension. Our teachers have picked up online teaching within a short period of time. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our teachers for their diligence which has helped the whole school accomplish the mission of 'Suspending Classes Without Suspending Learning'.

**Winnie Cheung, Principal,
Tak Nga Secondary School**



The live lessons are running quite smoothly in my school, thanks to our school's decision to engage a computer service provider. A timetable has been arranged for

every class so it is quite systematic. Even though the system is new to us, we started implementing e-learning a few years ago and we are quite confident conducting online lessons. At the beginning, it was awkward to speak to students without seeing and hearing them. Very soon, however, I got used to this tranquillity. I am sure the students have gained a lot of IT skills in this process, like how to have a meeting online, sharing screens and submitting documents to a designated place, which would be essential in their future workplaces.

**Bonnie Leung, Assistant English Panel Chair,
Tak Nga Secondary School**



Like so many other schools in Hong Kong, ours has been grappling not only with concern for our students' well-being but also with adapting to the challenges of conducting lessons entirely online. Thankfully, perhaps by divine providence, our school's management team had already been preparing a school-wide rollout of Microsoft Office's suite of services before the COVID-19 outbreak. This has been a blessing for our school in the difficult circumstances, as the use of Microsoft Teams (piloted and rolled out by our hardworking IT staff) has allowed teachers to connect with students and engage them with the learning material. Though students have had to overcome challenges in maintaining discipline while studying from home, the routine of online lessons has afforded them some semblance of normalcy during this trying time. I've been impressed not only by my students' levels of engagement during online lessons but also by the notable quality of their assignments. While all are counting down eagerly until the social distancing restrictions are lifted and students can interact in person, for now the availability of online lessons and teaching facilities has been invaluable.

**Paul Cowden, NET,
Tak Nga Secondary School**

Taking Student Writing Online: Marking and Assessing Online Versus Paper

One particular part of language teaching that can be done well online is marking and assessment of students' compositions.

Traditionally students write their compositions on single-lined paper. Upon collection, the teacher will have 30+ papers of varying stages of quality (in terms of handwriting, spacing, and paper condition). This presents several problems. Firstly, the space for making corrections may be adequate but for leaving feedback and suggestions it is limited. Secondly, inaccuracies in students' handwriting and technique can lead to more time taken by the teacher to sort out the data in front of them. Now I know that students need to improve their handwriting skills, but by this time in their educational careers, they have formed their handwriting style for the most part. So why should students and teachers suffer together? They shouldn't.

Allow me to use my experience with *Google Classroom* and *Google Docs*, and demonstrate how it can be used effectively to mark and assess a student's writing online. After establishing *Google Classroom* as the premier tool for delivering homework to the class, I can trust that my students will do as instructed.



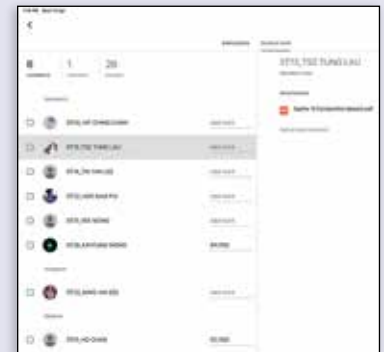
First, assigning the task is simple and managed well by the *Classroom* app. All students receive a push message as the work is assigned. Once the students have the assignment, I can be assured that they will complete it by the

due date, ask any questions about issues they may be having and if they fail to do the assignment, I will have the digital record to follow up with them.

The most beneficial part is the marking and assessment. The attached *Google Docs* I assigned via *Google Classroom* is unique to each student so they can simply submit it to me through the *Classroom* app. On the due date I receive the majority of students' work and can begin the process of guiding them to become better writers. In our traditional system, students write their composition to receive a grade. They most likely do a correction of it based on the teacher's feedback, which is fine, but this can be made smoother and more effective online. With an online writing assignment a running record is kept as the student's first draft

receives suggestions, corrections and comments from me, which they then act upon. I can work with each student individually in this manner, guiding them toward a better final writing product. The

handwriting legibility of both myself and my students is a non-factor, and I have as much space as I need to craft effective suggestions or make direct edits. Additionally, the students may communicate with me any uncertainties they have or explain a particular word choice, etc. This is all done in a running thread as their composition processes into a final copy. Besides the benefits I just mentioned, another one is that both myself and my students can do this work online from virtually anywhere and at any time. This creates an organic and fluid workflow that isn't confined to a desk or classroom nor a piece of single-lined paper which can be lost or damaged from being assigned to being marked by a teacher. This opportunity for the students to write and teachers to mark from virtually anywhere is liberating.



This entire process hinges upon each student having access to a computer and/or mobile phone at the very least, and schools can provide computers for students to use. It also requires the self-discipline of students to be diligent and

motivated (qualities which we should be teaching and expecting from our students). I should mention that students can submit their handwritten work digitally via the *Classroom* app and I can still mark their papers effectively.

In conclusion, I believe we shouldn't completely omit handwritten assignments from the scheme of work as they have benefits. Rather, we should reduce their number and add more online writing assignments to further train our students for the future through this modern and effective technology.

Jason Kasseris, NET,
Homantin Government Secondary School



students can identify their strengths and weaknesses which facilitate assessment for learning. Further learning and teaching of certain areas are thus identified, reinforced and so, progress can be made.

Teachers are taking every opportunity to engage with students during online lessons. We are not concerned if some students are distracted because if a student does not respond, teachers would be able to find out and remind him or her to stay focused. Students are also encouraged to learn more through self-directed learning by completing suggested online exercises. We have found that interactive e-learning activities highly motivate and engage students in their learning. These activities align with our school development concerns, which are mainly refining self-directed learning and enhancing assessment for learning. Learner diversity can also be addressed more effectively as students can learn at their own pace, and their interests and needs can be better catered for. Classes have been a mixture of online lessons and recorded videos for students who found it difficult to catch up with online classes.

While online learning from home may sound fun and convenient, it's really important for students to be self-disciplined. Teachers are helpful and they would follow up with students, and sometimes with parents through regular phone calls or email whenever they encounter any problems. To address the well-being of students, we are particularly careful to limit the amount of screen time our students are given each day, with daily homework assigned and posted on *Google Classroom*.

Students think learning from home is a pretty enjoyable experience. Not only have they been keeping up with their learning progress, but they can also stay in touch with their classmates and friends through social media. Learning online has more flexibility in terms of how they manage their time. This encourages students to become responsible masters of their own learning.

Teachers can also see changes in students. Students have actually become more attentive in online classes. Some of them would not say anything in the classroom previously, now they are asking teachers questions on private chat where more student-teacher interaction happens. Some students are eager to submit their homework and learn from teachers' feedback. This has been a learning experience with both students and teachers having to adapt to new experiences through online learning and for teachers, to find new ways to help students learn better.

**Josephine Ho, English Panel Chair,
Dr. Catherine F. Woo Memorial School**

Suspending Classes Without Suspending Learning

Due to the outbreak of the Covid-19 coronavirus, classes have been suspended since Chinese New Year. To facilitate student learning, many schools have resorted to teaching online. Zoom is a video conferencing app that many students are now familiar with. Teachers have radically gone beyond the traditional mode of teaching and have used a wide range of online tools to support student learning.

The development and use of e-learning over the past few years has meant that most of our teachers have adapted quickly to online teaching. Many of them had been using electronic devices in their classrooms even before the class suspension. We are experienced in delivering home learning and we have the flexibility in deciding how to facilitate online teaching. Teachers are all competent in designing e-lessons with clear learning objectives. Students are accustomed to the flipped classroom method of teaching, in which teachers prepare pre-lesson activities. For instance, students browse specific websites and resources or conduct research, then report back through *Google Classroom*.

Staying home for online learning over the past month has not made much difference compared to face-to-face lessons, as online classes were conducted following a strict timetable every week since class suspension in early February. Even now, there is smooth coordination among teachers to ensure that students' classes do not clash as they have multiple subjects to learn every week. Each online class usually lasts around 30 to 40 minutes and teachers are able to see most students' faces on webcams. During the lessons, teachers get students to do exercises or quizzes in order to check their readiness, and sometimes to consolidate what they have learnt via apps such as *Kahoot*, *Nearpod*, *Quizizz*, *Quizlet*, *Edpuzzle* and *Google Docs*. From the exercises submitted, both teachers and

COVID-19 Has Not Confined Learning and Teaching

Amidst the current COVID-19 phase of life, work from home and online lessons seem to be the new normal. But is it that simple, the 'new normal'? Children and adults are following the new life style of staying at home and following the new routine. Studying online and chatting with friends online look interesting. However, some teachers are unsure of how to deal with the huge challenges of preparing the lessons online, making learning and teaching meaningful. Parents, on the other hand, are concerned about how effective learning is taking place with kids studying online. These are the new challenges facing us.

For the very first time in my career I got the opportunity to work from home, which was very unique. I learnt to maintain the communication with the schools via *WhatsApp*, to collaborate with office colleagues and work on projects via *Zoom* meetings, which bring a whole new learning curve. While working from home, my teenage son and I shared unique experiences of accompanying each other on this unknown journey. One experience worthy of mention is the changes my son had to adapt to in his school life.

Having lessons online, following the school timetable and routine at home became the new normal for the past several weeks. However, being confined indoors most of the time has been challenging for everyone. No sports, no friends, no school life was extremely difficult. It was easy for everyone to feel that routines are mundane and monotonous. Out of boredom, my son started having frequent hunger pangs. It was a tough task to keep up with his food demands and it was a big challenge to keep him happy with a variety of healthy food every two hours. This obviously resulted in many arguments and disagreements during the day. After a big family meeting we came to a mutual agreement and took on the 'Food Project' as we called it.

One evening I suggested that he list out all the healthy food he would like to have. This really inspired him and he was on a roll from there on. Food was an easy hook for him to get engaged, involved and motivated. Playing active sports made him very conscious of his eating habits and food choices. He made a healthy meal plan for a week and printed it out and kept it displayed in the kitchen. He got curious about the ingredients, which led him to go out and get the groceries from the supermarket twice a week. This became a regular routine for him and he started helping with the household chores as well. As he enjoyed the whole experience and also saw people going through the whole phase of panic buying and

The 'Food Project'



the toilet paper shortage! Within two weeks he ended up making a weekly schedule for the meals, finding interesting recipes and trying out cooking. He has learnt how to follow the recipes and cook. Now he is in charge of Sunday dinners at home where he plans and executes everything — deciding the menu, buying the ingredients and cooking the meal. He also has a budget which keeps him very mindful of overspending. The 'Food Project' took away the boredom and resulted in a great learning experience for him and me.

As I reflect on this experience professionally in these unprecedented times, it feels like social and emotional learning is critical to re-engaging our children, supporting adults, rebuilding relationships, and creating a foundation for academic learning. Through the 'Food Project' my son got involved in learning across different levels and it also kept him happily engaged and motivated in doing meaningful and useful tasks and chores.

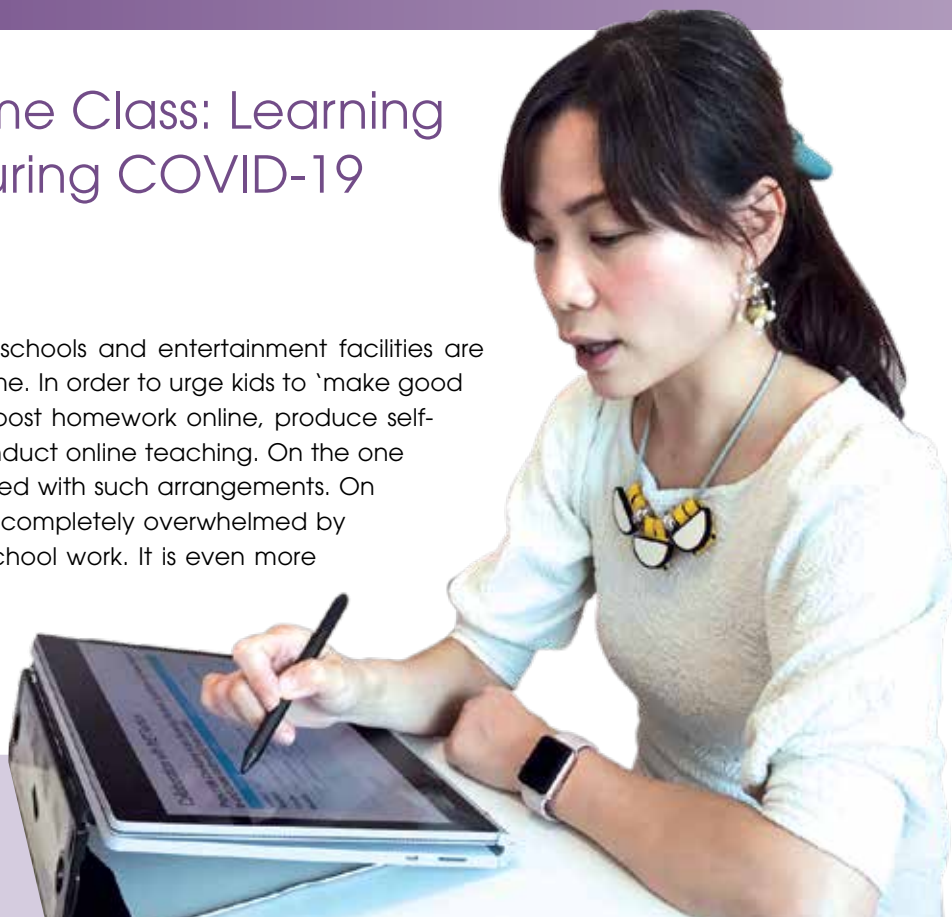
It seems that this situation has elevated the role of leaders in creating conditions that help children practise empathy, create social bonds across distance, and adapt to new learning experiences. It also creates emotionally and physically safe, supportive, and engaging learning environments that promote all children's social and emotional development.

Hetal Trivedi, Advisory Teacher, NET Section

Classwork to Home Class: Learning and Teaching During COVID-19

Introduction

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, schools and entertainment facilities are closed; many adults work from home. In order to urge kids to 'make good use of their time', some teachers post homework online, produce self-filmed educational videos and conduct online teaching. On the one hand, some parents are very satisfied with such arrangements. On the other hand, some families feel completely overwhelmed by trying to keep up with their kids' school work. It is even more difficult for parents to cope when they have more than one kid and both parents need to work from their home office every day.



My first Zoom class was conducted with this amateurish setting in my room.

Here is a crucial question: are we suspending classes without suspending learning? Students seem to be cramped with all kinds of assignments and online 'learning' activities, and are these activities well scaffolded? As a frontline teacher and beginner of online teaching, I have been reminding myself to create true learning opportunities for my students. Nonetheless, I am still exploring and integrating different aids into my online lessons. Thanks to the NET Section, I have this opportunity to reflect on what I have been doing and I believe there is big room for improvement in terms of my online teaching.

Teachers' Worries When Doing Online Teaching

In a workshop which aims to prepare colleagues for online teaching on 21 April 2020, I asked the audience about what their biggest concern was doing online teaching. Their fears were very real, such as students' concentration, teaching progress, online security and marking, etc.

Yes, online teaching is not only a challenge for parents and students, but it can also be a big milestone for teachers.



Frontline teachers showing their worries about online teaching in a word cloud in the workshop.

Ways To Enhance Interaction and Sustain Students' Interest

So far, I am so blessed with the online teaching experience on Zoom. The user-friendly annotation function, the integration of e-books without any delay and the pragmatic face beautification function enhance the teacher-student interaction and facilitate the smooth flow of online learning and teaching.

Besides, integrating *Nearpod* and *Poll Everywhere* for some understanding checking, competitions, collaborative writing activities and matching exercises, I am astonished to see that some students are even more responsive than in the physical classroom. In an S4 reading lesson, students were asked to finish a short reading comprehension task. Before checking the answers, some students were invited to input their answers using the common annotation feature. To my surprise, a student who used to be very passive in class in the past, tried to explain the correct MC option by highlighting the lines in the reading text and circling the misleading words in the questions, without the teacher's request. The natural interaction among students shows me once again that learning can happen in many unpredictable ways, with various learners' styles.



Integrating other learning apps in the online lessons, teachers can effectively check students' understanding and monitor their learning progress.

Reflections

All in all, online learning not only maintains students' development but also boosts teachers' capacity. I had made a commitment to a sharing session for an MA course at CUHK and thought it would have to be cancelled due to the pandemic and social distancing regulations. However, I have recently been invited to

do the sharing session via Zoom. Thanks to technology, I realised that the sharing session could go on regardless of the physical environment and teachers can now enroll for webinars hosted by renowned speakers across time zones. I have never thought that I would be able to achieve that much while staying at home.



Sharing my online teaching experience, I got positive feedback that teachers' professional capacity had been greatly enhanced during this pandemic.



With advanced technology, we are able to conduct professional development activities anywhere and anytime.



VOICE FROM STUDENTS

Having understood teachers' feelings during the pandemic, let's invite four S4 students to shed some light on this issue.

Instead of having a Zoom or Google Meet lesson, some teachers have decided to record some video clips and posted them online for teaching purposes. I love this sort of e-learning since I can decide when to take the lesson. It is more convenient for students because we can watch the video clips as many times as we need to and stop at any time we want. Regarding the Zoom and Google Meet lessons, there are always some technical problems so students may be removed from class and the words written by the teachers on the screen may delay. I was removed from a Zoom room four times during a Zoom meeting in the past! It is annoying and frustrating!

Someone asked me whether I like online learning and my general response was negative. I felt this way because if I have any questions, I am not able to ask the teacher as easily as in a physical classroom. Also, during online lessons, there are not many chances to talk with friends and classmates. It is very boring and makes me feel lonely since having interaction with classmates and teachers is one of the things I enjoy in the learning process.

Chu Wai Lok, Ivan

Under the COVID-19 pandemic, online learning has become a major part of my life. I think online learning is convenient as I can have lessons at home instead of at school. It helps me keep up with my work. Also, it is more interesting than the lesson in class since teachers create more games to let us understand the things we have learned.

Although online learning is helpful, there are some problems when I have lessons. It is convenient that we can have lessons online. However, there is a time limit in the software and the time limit is short. The lesson is always stopped by the software and it makes me miss out on some important points. The WiFi connection also plays a crucial role in the learning process. When the network is not stable, I get disconnected from the lesson and I can't connect to the lesson again.

Though there are some problems with online learning, I am still thankful for the modern technology available to us today.

Kwong Wai Yan, Melody

In my opinion, nothing could be worse than the online learning experience. At the beginning of the class suspension period, I thought online learning was quite good for me as I enjoyed a flexible schedule. But after a short time, I changed my mind. Since there is too much temptation at home, I sink in it. Despite the fact that I remind myself "If I want to improve my grades, I need to keep my spirit up", I am not as motivated and enthusiastic as I am in the traditional classroom. I am also afraid that my learning progress is negatively affected. Although the number of coronavirus confirmed cases has been dropping in Hong Kong, the battle is far from over. I believe that we still need online learning in this situation. I feel sad and worried about this.

Ko Yip Kai, Kary

I think the idea of online learning has always been a very effective way of learning.

One thing I like about e-learning is simple – the Internet. I mean, there is an enormous library of learning materials sitting right there which I cannot use in class. By online learning, every single piece of information is at your finger tips.

Moreover, the use of the Internet allows learners to consult anyone regarding the questions that puzzle them. Many online resources like Quora and Reddit allow learners to consult peers or professionals to answer their questions.

The vastness of the Internet gives so much convenience to learners but at the same time, gives learners so much inconvenience. Given how vast the Internet is, it is sometimes very hard for us learners to find the right piece of information we need, resulting in hours and hours of us trying to find the material we need.

Overall, I think online learning is a great way to learn in the 21st century. Perhaps some hiccups still exist, but I think the benefits it brings totally pay off. Therefore, I still maintain my belief that online learning is effective.

Ho Ka Him, Kelvin

Sammi Lai Chan Ching Yan,
Deputy Head of English
Department, Homantin
Government Secondary School



Our COVID-19 World Book & Copyright Day 2020



Promotional Video at the Opening Ceremony



Opening Ceremony on Zoom

Time	P.1	P.2	P.3	P.4	P.5	P.6
9:30-10:00	Introduction "Hello, I'm..."	Storytelling "The Stone Lion"	Learning Activities "Let's read a story"	Creative Ideas: Adaptation and author's creative process		
10:00-10:30	Extended Activities Creating a graphic novel	Extended Activities Making a paper book	Extended Activities Making a 3D book	Extended Activities Drawing a story		

Zoom Timetable

Celebrating World Book & Copyright Day has been an established activity of ours at Alliance Primary School, Whampoa (APSW) for a number of years. Throughout the COVID-19 school suspension period, we wanted to continue encouraging students to read storybooks so we had organised activities using the online software Zoom.

More than 500 students participated in our World Book & Copyright Day opening ceremony. The opening ceremony was introduced with an appealing short video clip that featured the soon-to-be retired principal ('Principal Mama' at APSW) who met fellow teachers on a 'virtual cruise'. After that, a pre-recorded YouTube video was shown to junior students, a storytelling session that was conducted by teachers. Afterwards, students had to take part in an extended activity related to the story. Senior students learnt about what essential elements are required in detective stories to attract

readers, and the creative process of some authors was highlighted too. Storybooks can appear daunting for some reluctant students, but we hoped students could learn that books can be our friends, as they provide us with a useful source of information, and good reading skills are important for success in life. We shared different ideas on reading books and we hoped that these could stimulate students' interest in reading. Later in the afternoon, we held a 'DEAR Time' ('Drop Everything And Read') session for an hour. It's a practice which we usually do at school on English and Chinese assembly days. Finally, we continued to promote different online resources and we also provided a platform for students to access storybooks during this difficult period. World Book & Copyright Day really was an unforgettable and valuable experience for all of us.

Josephine Choi, Principal, Alliance Primary School, Whampoa

Professional Development Opportunities for Local English Teachers

Schools throughout the city have been suspended since the Lunar New Year holiday to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. Therefore, having to go from classroom teaching to virtual teaching has been a whole new experience - not just for parents and students but teachers as well. The majority of us had to adapt to online learning. Video recordings and Zoom lessons were prepared and conducted for students. Professional Development (PD) sessions for the English Department are another issue.

The difficult COVID-19 period gave me the opportunity to conduct a PD session for my colleagues at Alliance Primary School, Whampoa (APSW). I presented it through the online software Zoom. The PD session was live streamed and the topic was on Edpuzzle. It is an easy-to-use platform that engages students with videos which can be edited. Questions can be added as a form of formative assessment for students. This also appeared to be the perfect opportunity to spread the word about this great online learning platform, amidst the school suspension.

Before we started, my colleagues created an account on Edpuzzle, and a PowerPoint was prepared and my friends were used as guinea pigs (students) to help me while I explored the teaching platform. On the day, as a warm-up activity, I had given the teachers the chance to try out Edpuzzle as students and then I gave a brief introduction to what it is and how it works. The session went smoothly. My colleagues participated and contributed while they were going through the procedure of how it worked. I had also created a document with simple instructions on how to use Edpuzzle, so they could refer back to it at a later period.

It was a wonderful learning opportunity to deliver a technology-mediated teaching session for my colleagues. I hope the teachers got as much out of the session as I did! As enjoyable as it was, I do, however, look forward to returning to school and seeing my students and colleagues face to face once again.

**Donna Choi, NET,
Alliance Primary School, Whampoa**

Fostering Students' Literacy During Social Distancing



Graphophonics and Grammar

During this unprecedented time of school closures and distance learning, teachers and schools have had to get creative in adapting their curricula to reflect the new learning environment. The need to address difficulties associated with a shift away from the traditional classroom model and venture into the realm of technology-driven distance learning is at the forefront of our minds and on the agenda for all our meetings. This transition has been especially hard for Key Stage One (KS1) learners as they are still developing into self-directed capable learners and require more scaffolding and support in their lessons. They say necessity is the mother of innovation, and schools are facing a real need. Overwhelmingly, teachers have stepped up efforts to meet these new challenges head-on and overcome the obstacles presented under the current circumstances. One innovation in teaching that I felt might address some of these issues is the use of the popular video platform *YouTube*. Exploring the educational power of this on-demand video streaming service became my focus during lockdown.

On 4 February this year, I launched the *YouTube* channel 'Home Learning Heroes'. Its mission was to allow me to better connect with our KS1 Space Town students in home quarantine. 'Home Learning Heroes' quickly grew in popularity among the students and staff. The channel features me at my home in Yuen Long reading Space Town Big Books and conducting mini-lessons on Graphophonics and Grammar, and even some Readers' Theater, often with the help of my own children.

Starting a Space Town learning channel on *YouTube* was an idea I came up with after learning that the school resumption date was likely to be postponed again. My thinking was to continue our Space Town shared reading lessons with the students. If they were unable

to come to me, then I realised I would just have to go to them. The best way I could accomplish that goal was to first make sure they had access to our reading materials at home and then empower them to engage with the texts in a reading 'walk-through' style. Thus, the creation of 'Home Learning Heroes'. The purpose of the channel was to re-create a personalised and authentic learning environment for our students that would encourage, support and guide their literacy skills development while at home.



The success of the 'Home Learning Heroes' is in the connection it makes with the students. By using *YouTube* as a platform which is

easily accessible to most Hong Kong students, I am able to deliver an in-person walk-through for each Big Book and many of the home readers for Primary 1-3. Each reading lesson is complete with a picture walk, open-ended questions and a story poster breakdown at the conclusion of the book. In addition, I decided to use my own children in the grammar and graphophonics lessons, increasing the authenticity and personality of the videos. My own children are also in KS1, so their excitement in the lessons is genuine and I feel it really engages our student viewers.

As for my students, I wanted to make sure they felt there was still a connection to the classroom, including the high energy and sometimes silly antics that are common in our lessons. The goal was to deliver the content in as personal a manner as I could. I used popular gaming app software that allows me to use the self-facing camera as an overlay on to the reading



Taste Test

material. My thinking was that if students could see my face in real-time as we read together, it would help bring a sense of camaraderie and engagement to the task. I have found this method to be especially valuable when providing feedback on creative writing to non-native English speakers.

School closures, with all students experiencing distance learning, many for the first time, can put a lot of pressure on parents to help their children with the course work. Independent learning is a set of skills which take time to develop and are nurtured in the classroom. Removing daily teacher guidance shifts the focus of support on to the parents. Even with students' access to technology at home, it is very important for teachers to have set clear expectations and to conduct lessons in as much detail as possible. This helps students feel empowered to accomplish assigned tasks without placing the burden on the parents. I took this into account in the initial design of the 'Home Learning Heroes' layout. The students engage with the lessons through their own home devices. Unlike our scheduled Zoom based lessons, students are encouraged to participate on their own when it is most convenient for them. The channel is designed to facilitate independent learning by shifting the responsibility to the learner rather than relying on a parent's or guardian's participation. The goal is to adhere to the principles of Gradual Release of Responsibility (GRR) which provides specific scaffolding to maximise learner independence.

This was not an easy task for me. At first, I was a little embarrassed opening myself up for the world to see on *YouTube*. I am from a generation before social media, *Facebook* and *TikTok*. I borrowed bits of equipment from school and friends and tried to patch them all together. It was truly a duct tape operation in the beginning. I also had no experience using *YouTube* as



Big Book Series

a content creator. However, I believed that through 'Home Learning Heroes', I could best support our students during a time of great pressure and anxiety. This persuaded me to take a chance and jump in.

As of this writing, my 'Home Learning Heroes' channel on *YouTube* has been viewed more than 16,000 times with some Big Book videos reaching over 1,000 views each. These numbers are quite encouraging for the school and are accompanied by positive feedback from students and parents. To maintain the momentum and support continuing learning for the students, I upload new content every week.

I am pleased and honoured to know I have made a small difference in the outcomes of our students' continued learning. Looking forward, I plan to continue innovating my channel. Among other things, I intend to introduce guided reading in small groups as well as publish more videos related to the Space Town learning material. I hope to build a reservoir of useful content for future use.

Donald Elkins, NET, Queen Elizabeth School Old Students' Association Primary School

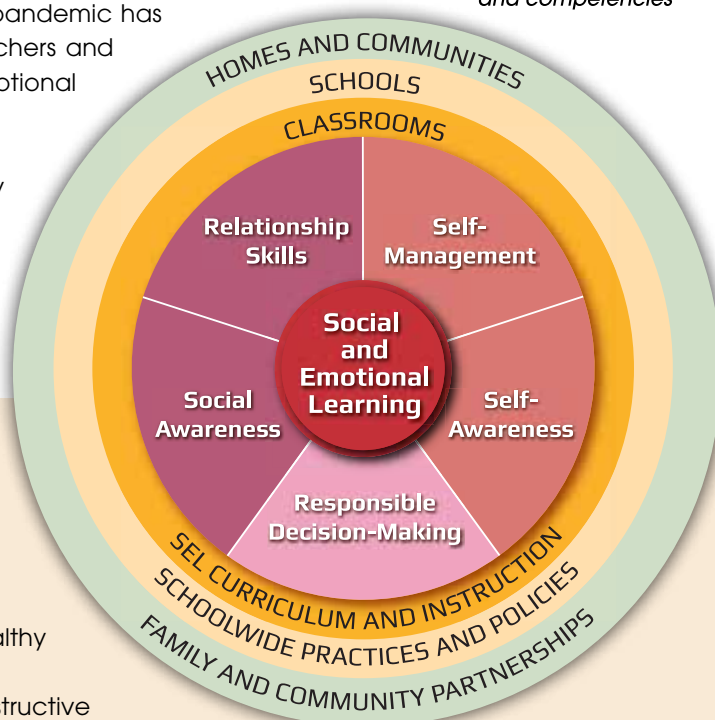
Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

The shift to digital learning in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic has brought unprecedented challenges to students and teachers and raised awareness of the importance of social and emotional learning (SEL).

The ability to regulate emotions and behaviour is a key component of a set of skills often referred to as social and emotional skills. The skills developed through SEL are often referred to as 'life skills', 'social skills' or 'soft skills'. Five core competencies have been identified and widely recognised as critical social and emotional skills:

- **Self-awareness:** the ability to recognise your emotions, thoughts and their influence on behaviour
- **Self-management:** the ability to regulate emotions, thoughts and behaviours
- **Social awareness:** the ability to take the perspective of and empathise with others
- **Relationship skills:** the ability to build and maintain healthy relationships
- **Responsible decision-making:** the ability to make constructive and respectful choices about your behaviour and interactions with others

Source: CASEL wheel and competencies



SEL and Children's Whole-person Development

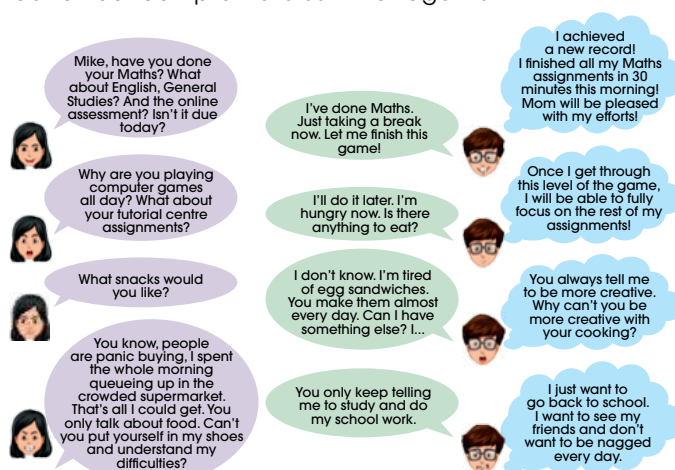
As reported in a recent study from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) on Social and Emotional Skills, substantial empirical evidence has been found about the importance of social and emotional skills for successfully navigating one's life. Traits of open-mindedness are found to be the driver of lifelong learning and emotional stability skills are most predictive of mental health. The development of these skills has shown overall positive results, including better academic performance, improved attitudes, behaviours and relationships with peers, as well as deeper connection to school, fewer delinquent acts and reduced emotional distress.

Supporting SEL during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Remember what our children experienced during the class suspension period? A lot of them were doing online learning and self-learning, but some of them might have been spending much of their free time playing video games, binge-watching TV and/or even idling. As reported around the globe, during the current pandemic, a lot of children are experiencing social isolation which they might not be aware of, and in this connection, children without siblings may be particularly vulnerable. Stressors such as fears of infection, boredom and frustration, lack of face-to-face contact with peers and personal space at home can be easily neglected.

The social and emotional well-being of children deserve more of our attention as teachers. It is about keeping them connected and helping them feel safe and

secure. Little efforts such as sharing an inspiring song or quote and a positive message help to make our digital classrooms more relational and supportive. Pausing and inviting students to check in with how they are feeling can strengthen self-awareness and emotional connections. Ending with a reflection activity that involves goal setting and provides tips on regulating behaviour can promote self-management.



In the event of prolonged home confinement, family members are the closest resource for children to seek help from. The increased contact time at home can provide a favourable context for promoting SEL. Ample opportunities are available for young people to make responsible decisions and reflect on the outcome of their choices. SEL can be embedded in the fabric of our daily family life. Moments of parent-child miscommunication or sibling conflict can be a starting point for identifying emotions, controlling impulses and exploring acceptable alternatives.

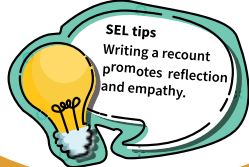
Resources for Keeping SEL Accessible

To help our children cope better with this kind of situation, the NET Section has developed an SEL resource webpage: Social and Emotional Learning: Fostering Children's Whole-person Development. It provides some ideas as to the development of children's social and emotional skills, which are sometimes overlooked but are crucial for their whole-person development. The tasks and activities are designed to be fun and encourage tapping into children's natural curiosity. Children can explore on their own or engage with their family members and classmates in the inquiry process. The tasks promote interaction, exploration, creativity and problem-solving.

Share how you or your family helped someone during the difficult time of the COVID-19 pandemic.



Acts of Kindness



Think of one challenging experience in your relationship with someone and how you would like to cope better in this period. Come up with goals and the steps to reach these goals.

I am stuck in the same room with my sister the whole day! We're fighting nearly every day. I need a way out! I want a change!

Oh yes! I'll write an action plan and run through the steps.



Sibling Conflict - My Action Plan

If my brother / sister starts to ...

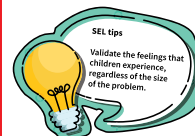
Things I can say:

Things I can do:

People I can talk to:

Things I must remember not to ...

My goal: To resolve conflicts with my sister



Freepik: Free Vectors

Christina Cipriano, Director of Research at the Yale Centre for Emotional Intelligence described this unusual time as "a daunting reality, no question, but the worst thing we can do for our teachers, students, and families is de-prioritize SEL during the pandemic," she reminds educators. "It is next-to-impossible to expect teaching and learning to occur in a crisis without attending to our emotions." SEL is more than a fancy buzzword. It deserves to be at the forefront of our hearts and minds. Developing an emphasis on SEL at home and in schools will lead to a more supportive space where students feel emotionally regulated and connected to others, a mental condition necessary for engagement in meaningful learning. Prioritising social and emotional wellness is after all, a choice.

Carol Pang, Senior Curriculum Development Officer, NET Section

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OECD Study on Social and Emotional Skills

<http://www.oecd.org/education/cei/social-emotional-skills-study/>



Scan the QR code for more information about SEL



Storytelling : Let Our Imagination Run Wild

Once upon a time in a land not so far away there lived many stressed out teachers and students.

Times were tough but then came an even greater challenge: a mysterious illness stalked the land and brought fear and uncertainty to many...

I could continue the above story until we got to ...'and they all lived happily ever after', but I think many of you will understand where I was going with it having been in the eye of the storm of a reality that a few short years ago would have appeared like dystopian science fiction or even worse, a Brothers Grimm story.

The mysterious illness of course is the COVID-19 pandemic and the challenge for teachers and students has been to stay in touch with each other and make learning and teaching possible using imagination and technology. Many have been rising magnificently to this challenge on *Zoom*, *Google Classroom*, *Microsoft Teams* and a myriad of online platforms available to teachers and students in Hong Kong. We don't grow when things are easy, we grow when we face challenges.

The storytelling team is no different and when all our opportunities to bring stories alive for parents and children in schools, shopping centres and public spaces disappeared, we had to think of another way.

Transferring our storytelling programme from live performance to video was the way to go but it presented many new challenges that we had not faced before. Not only technological challenges but how to connect with and engage children and parents remotely. Copyright issues also became a huge headache and hindrance to the project, with strict rules on the use of music, images and storylines.

Like in all good stories when faced with a problem

we worked together to come up with a solution. When copyright for songs was either unobtainable or prohibitively expensive we decided to write our own. It's surprisingly easy to put together a catchy children's song with a specific language focus designed for specific year levels in Hong Kong.

We also had little professional film making equipment so like our storytelling, improvisation and imagination became the order of the day.

Our 'Green Screen' consisted of White Boards pasted with green sheets of A4 paper and our lack of equipment had to be compensated for by astute editing.

Tapping into our own childhoods was a very important part of the process. We always tell parents that they must engage with the world of the child rather than vice versa and that storytelling is the perfect way to immerse yourself in your child's world every day. We tried to combine the naïve enthusiasm of our childhoods with the careful planning of a trained teacher in designing our video content.

Having fun with stories doesn't mean that children aren't learning. On the contrary, they are learning problem solving and critical thinking skills. Characters in stories enable children to relate to them and live another reality through them. As these characters confront and solve problems in the stories by thinking critically, so do the young readers of these stories.

I think everyone in the teaching community has honed their problem solving and critical thinking skills over the past very challenging months. Like in the best children's stories, every cloud has a silver lining.

John Hone, Regional NET Coordinator, NET Section

In uncertain times, reading for enjoyment breeds motivation. So while we are all finding our feet with the new challenges of school closures and online lessons, it has been important for both teachers and students to be able to look for different opportunities whilst also remembering to relax and breathe amidst all the chaos. Here, we are encouraging the sharing of stories for enjoyment without having an instructional agenda.

Particularly for younger students, being read to is very important. We know that children who read for pleasure exhibit stronger language skills, better academic performance, and greater emotional intelligence. Our intention is to foster a love of reading through reading aloud to children starting at a young age. This serves not only as a hopefully enjoyable experience but also provides inspiration to teachers and parents to continue to share good stories with children.

School closures provide the ideal window of opportunity for developing a recreational reading habit. This is a chance to remember what can be done with access to good material without instructional add-ons and merely celebrating the power of engaging children with a well-told story.

Roland Smith, Advisory Teacher, NET Section



To continue to promote reading during the COVID-19 school suspension period, we had to take up a new project to produce storytelling videos.

Our team has conducted storytelling sessions in kindergartens and shopping malls as well as training sessions in primary schools and secondary schools. All these sessions involved young children, students, teachers and parents who exuberantly participated in the activities, stories and songs. Producing storytelling videos without an audience is a whole new adventure for the team. From decorating the set to the actual storytelling, the experience is surreal. To liven up the videos, the post-production team uses green screen to transfer the graphics and pictures from the books as the background.

Storytellers need to imagine there is an audience responding before them and get comfortable 'speaking' to the camera. The singing of the original songs that our team members create would be much more gratifying when shared and enjoyed alongside the children while dancing and moving around with them.



The little mouse walked until he came to a hill and he started to walk up...

The hill was very soft... "This is the softest hill I've ever felt."

The hill was very yellow... "This is the yellowist hill I ever walked up."

The hill was very furry... "Furry?"...

ROARRR!

Being the Mouse in the NET Section's 'Let Our Imagination Run Wild' online video series Episode 1: 'The Lion and the Mouse' was great fun.

We came to the NET Section office to record the video one afternoon during the height of the coronavirus outbreak, when most of Hong Kong was working and studying from home. Channelling Aesop's Mouse, I worked with Roland, who magically transformed in front of the camera lights into Aesop's Lion. Three takes and we were done. High five!... No! Elbow bump!

Next came the song. John had a little ditty in his head, and while Roland and I were filming with Kenny, Jojo was busy working out the guitar chords in a kid-friendly key. It didn't take long for us to put it all together into a catchy song comparing the attributes of animals in the grassland, concluding with the Lion and the Mouse. More elbow bumps all around!

The Lion's braver than the Mouse, the Lion's braver than the Mouse, the Lion's braver than the Mouse, oh yes it is! ...

Wait a minute? Did you hear that story? Ahhh! ...

The Mouse is braver than the Lion, the Mouse is braver than the Lion, the Mouse is braver than the Lion, oh yes it is! ...

SQUEAKKI!

Stephen Cooley, Regional NET Coordinator, NET Section

The instant feedback from the audience, their reactions, energy and engagement level are irreplaceable. Nevertheless, with a little bit of imagination, post-production and a whole lot of team effort, the storytelling team has had a lot of firsts in video-production and Season 1 videos are underway.

Jojo Chan, Advisory Teacher, NET Section



Scan the QR code for
Let Our Imagination
Run Wild Episode 1:
The Lion and
the Mouse



Scan the QR code for
Let Our Imagination
Run Wild Episode 2:
Shark in the Park!



Together We Fight the Virus – an Audio Book Voice Over Experience

When I was approached by Mr Joe Leung to participate in this meaningful campaign, I was more than happy to support an online learning resource about how to stay safe and be considerate of others during these uncertain times. My daughter Ruby, her friends and classmates have raised the concerns identified in the audio book and have lots of feelings of confusion and questions. This audio book was well written with Key Stage One students in mind. The visual



graphics are very clear to understand and the script addresses the concerns about the impact of COVID-19 and how it spreads. I highly recommend you share this with your family and classes. There is also a Cantonese version. It was a pleasure working with the professional team from EDB. A very memorable and meaningful experience.

Susan Bowden, Advisory Teacher, NET Section

Hi, my name is Ruby March, I am nine years old and I have done a voice over in the past month for the 'Together We Fight The Virus' campaign and it has been a very interesting experience. I felt very special to be asked to help with this audio book to tell about how to stay safe from the coronavirus.

When I went to the studio it was not exactly what I had expected. It had a big couch and lots of stuffed toys! There was also a big white board with drawings of cartoon characters that might be on some Chinese TV cartoon shows and some cartoons which haven't even been created yet!

At the start I was sitting in a cubicle which looked like it was a block of old cheese! (Except it had a door on it.) Well in the cubicle there was a chair and the script. Mum went first and she took ages! And believe it or not, hers was the first and probably the shortest line in the whole script!

When we were doing the script I felt very nervous. I was thinking, 'Did I do anything incorrectly?' Or, 'Did I use the right tone?' But overall I'm pretty proud of what I did. Mum said I was good and so did the crew so that made me feel way better.

When the video came out I was one of the first to watch it. (Well, that is after the meeting they had at mum's work.) After that it was on the HK government's website and lots of people saw it there, but sadly our family in Australia could not see it there because it was not in their range. (It was geo-blocked to countries outside of Hong Kong.) But now it is on *YouTube* and everyone can see it!

In case you were wondering who I was playing in this audio book, I was the 'Little Boy' (though I was surprised that they didn't make my voice sound more like a little boy.) But I still sounded like a 9-year-old girl so it felt a bit weird when I watched it. But the audio book tells a lot about how to wash our hands properly and not to forget our neighbours and relatives. It's colourful and gives you lots of useful information. I think you should check it out.



I hope that you recognise my role and appreciate it. I think that you will find it a very good script and it's all thanks to the director, Mr Lam Kin Ming.

Ruby March



Scan the QR code for the audio book





“Educating the Mind Without Educating the Heart Is No Education At All.” - Aristotle

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has brought social and economic activities to a standstill globally. Schools in Hong Kong have been suspended since February, a strategic measure to enforce social distancing with an aim to safeguard our students against the deadly virus.

As school suspension continued, parents and teachers were naturally concerned over the disruption of learning. They were right to have this apprehension! However, if we pay closer attention to our children’s and students’ needs, it is not just cognitive, but also affective needs that we should pay heed to.

In the 21st century, though we think we are so connected by technology, ironically, our students seem so isolated and disconnected.

Such helpless feelings are openly shared by a couple of secondary one students during the COVID-19 restrictions:

From their sharing, you can sense that many students are at a loss during this period and have gone through extreme emotional states, some even experienced unhappy family relationships and possibly the fear of getting infected.

Thus, simply delivering online learning through Zoom alone cannot fulfil students’ needs. As contemporary educators and learners, we should not only focus on acquiring knowledge and developing the cognitive aspects of our minds.

Recent research conducted by Casel (2019), for instance, has confirmed that young adults’ success is not only determined by academic achievement,

but also by how much they feel they are in control of unexpected situations. Their ability to control emotions plays a much bigger role in predicting their future success.

With such data in place, it is not difficult to deduce that catering for the affective needs of our students is extremely important. Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) should be integrated into learning and teaching. The development of such qualities as empathy, compassion, altruism and kindness helps nurture students to be well-balanced educated citizens with ‘a sound mind in a sound body’. It is such qualities that make us human and ultimately give us meaning in our lives.

In fact, this educational philosophy is not novel. It was pertinently preached and revered by Aristotle, a Greek philosopher, over 2000 years ago. He held the belief that “educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all”. His faith was fully supported by Mahatma Gandhi, an Indian activist, who promoted the idea that “an education which is only to awaken

mind but does not touch the soul of a person is worthless.”

Such an education can only foster a person who knows about everything but feels nothing.

Educators and parents should work together in creating learning and teaching opportunities whereby students and children can practise social and emotional

skills with others, so that they can feel less lonely and more connected with others. Such connectivity can ultimately bring happiness resulting in achieving higher levels of well-being.

**Catherine Lam, Regional NET Coordinator,
NET Section**



“Learn to open your heart and mind to the infinite wonder that exists for you in life” - Steven Redhead

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Online Learning: Actualising Objectives and Enhancing the Learning Process

Introduction

When the suspension period was announced, my colleagues and I initially focused on the negatives: the removal of in-school contact and the limitations of online learning. For us, IT had always felt like an attractive 'add on' rather than an opportunity to assist the learning process in novel ways. In the face of this challenge we asked ourselves, "How can online learning help actualise objectives and assist the learning processes in ways otherwise unavailable in traditional face-to-face learning?" Over time, we found the suspension period provided a unique opportunity to reorganise and enhance the curriculum by using IT to extend learning beyond the usual 40-minute time period of the traditional school context.

To situate our case, I will quickly describe how we have used IT to modify the curriculum and how we have tried to extend the learning process in a longitudinal way by describing a lesson from our unit 'Healthy Lifestyle'.

Outline of the Lesson

The objective of the lesson was for students to make suggestions on a healthy diet using sentences with target vocabulary and sentence structure. The three sections of the lesson were pre-task, online Zoom lesson, and post-task. In the pre-task, students posted photographs of what they ate at home on Seesaw, and wrote comments under their own and other students' pictures. During the Zoom lesson the class reviewed the pre-task sharing their thoughts on their classmates' diet and then worked in groups of five analysing a section of diary reports. They also used posters with information on healthy eating, the food pyramid, and information on dietary requirements for their age group. Using Google Slides, students worked in groups in Zoom breakout rooms to analyse a food diary. The lesson concluded with presentations from groups and a whole class discussion. After the lesson, the students analysed their own food photographs in preparation for the final writing task. Teachers made the Seesaw, Google

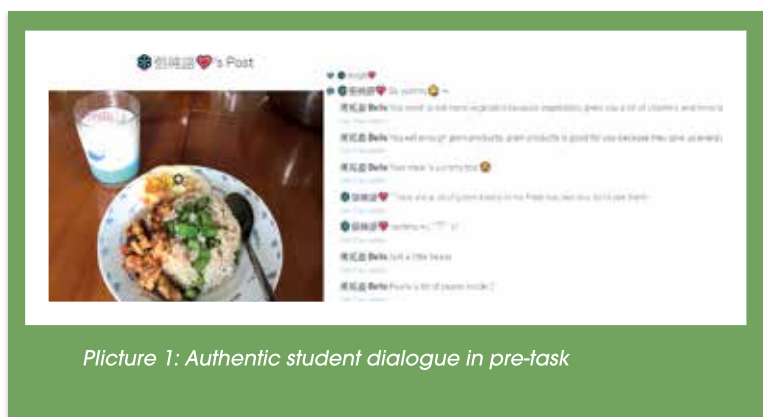
Slides, and other resources available for the students to reference when doing the post-task.

New-found Time

Matching curriculum needs with complimentary features of online platforms opens new opportunities for interactive learning in face-to-face lessons. A pre-task can absorb traditionally teacher-centric learning content and processes, but more importantly, create collaborative resources for learning in the main part of the lesson. Language content, content-related instruction, and procedural instructions such as 'how to do the pre/post-task' and 'how to use a new platform' can be video recorded and posted before a lesson. By moving some of the teaching content and processes to pre/post-tasks, we found extra time in the Zoom lessons for students and teachers to have longer group discussions, ask more questions, and subsequently, pursue lines of inquiry on ideas for longer. This led to students collaborating on a deeper conceptual level.



Picture 2: Students' comments scaffold an evolution of ideas in the pre-task

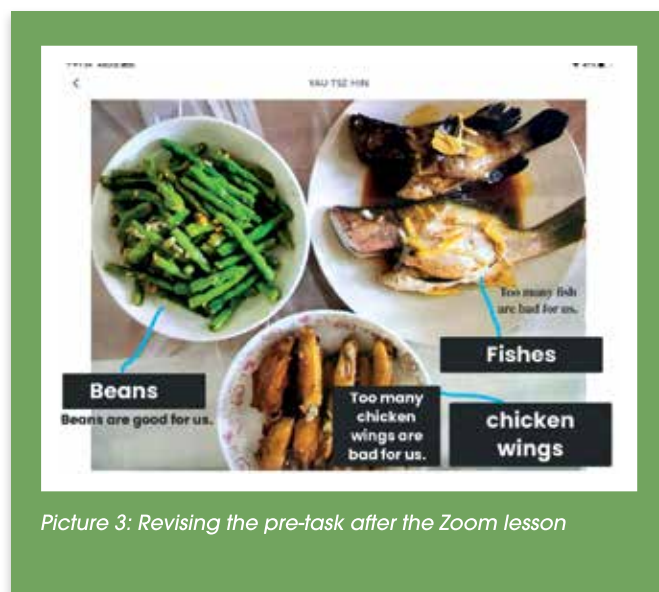


Picture 1: Authentic student dialogue in pre-task

Connecting Learning Over Time Using IT

IT platforms can erase the boundaries of a single lesson and scaffold collaborative learning for sustained periods of time. In Seesaw, students posted their own authentic resources that were visible to the entire learning community. In doing so, they had the opportunity to view and comment on their own and each other's work. Picture 1 shows an example of a student engaging in dialogue about their meal with another classmate. The back and forth demonstrated in the discussion shows an increased motivation to engage in the pre-task in ways

individual paper-based work cannot. Similarly, in Picture 2, we can see how comments from different students are related but also how the third comment is a more sophisticated evolution of the first. The use of the same key words in the students' comments in Picture 2 could suggest the earlier contributions may have scaffolded the comments that followed. Finally, Picture 3 provides evidence of a student independently returning to their own photograph to revise and improve their work by adding more detail after the group discussion in the Zoom lesson.

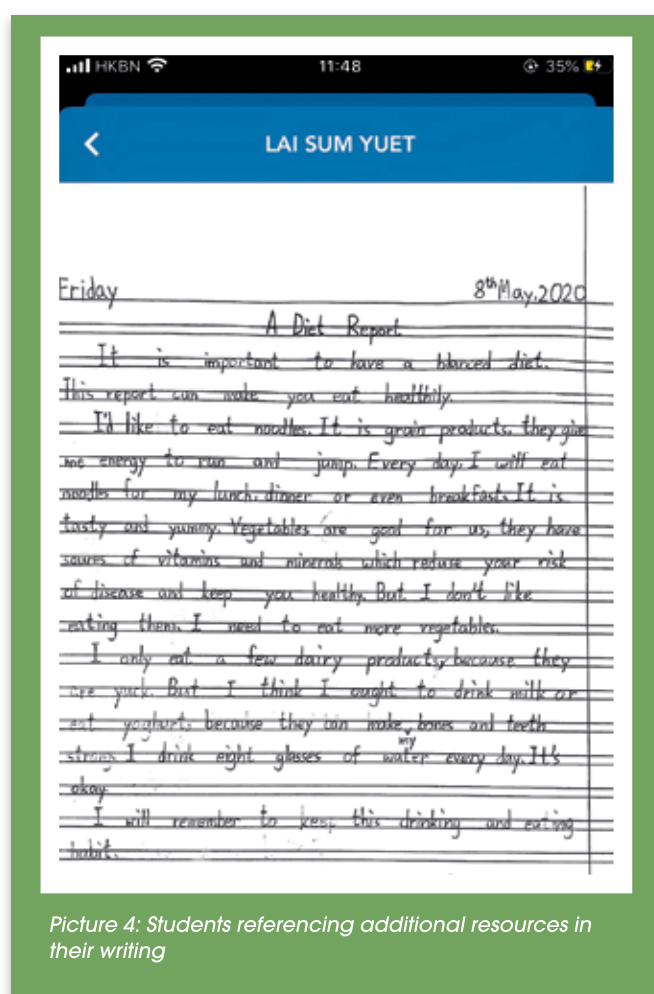


Picture 3: Revising the pre-task after the Zoom lesson

During our Zoom lesson, Seesaw posts positioned the group discussion in something familiar and tangible: what they actually eat at home. The students could dig deeper into the nutritional analysis because they had already covered basic content before the lesson. Students and teachers were able to revisit, revise, and reference ideas of the past to refine their learning in the present.

After the lesson, we found students from all ability groups had enriched their writing by drawing from ideas generated in the pre-task and the class discussion. In their writing task one student explained, "We should eat more fruit and vegetables because they have vitamins and minerals. **Vitamins and minerals help our body fight disease.**" This additional sentence is outside the core course materials and entered the learning process as a result of the more detailed group discussion. Although this extra sentence might not seem like much of a development, it was from a student who usually requires additional support with learning English. Picture 4 is another sample from a student who is referencing supplementary texts when undertaking the final writing task.

Online platforms have a unique timelessness that is absent in a standalone face-to-face lesson. In face-to-face lessons, what is communicated and



Picture 4: Students referencing additional resources in their writing

what is received is restricted by its real-time context. Information runs through time in a linear fashion. The teachers and students cannot pause, rewind, or fast-forward time at their will. Inversely, in online learning teachers and students' contributions to platforms create an evolutionary library where acquired knowledge is recorded and stored. This educational artefact is both an epistemic snapshot of aggregated knowledge in the past, and a scaffold for learning in the present. Teachers and students can use the generated information to connect learning between lessons, units and levels in ways previously segregated by timetabled lessons.

Overall, my colleagues and I believe IT tools can mediate new ways of learning that are often restricted within the timetabled lessons inside the walls of the school. Learning outcomes can be achieved, and even enhanced by carefully matching the curriculum with complimentary features of online platforms and using those features to connect learning over time. We hope that our school and other schools around Hong Kong can consider a longitudinal approach to learning through the use of IT even after the suspension period has passed.

Tom Underwood, NET, Queen Elizabeth School Old Students' Association Branch Primary School

Collaboration Matters: Maintaining Quality Teaching and Learning Amidst Class Suspension

The year 2020 will always remain in our memories as a year full of challenges, worries and uncertainties as COVID-19 quickly spread all over the world. To enforce social distancing, schools in Hong Kong faced a temporary suspension for months.

Every cloud has its silver lining. Students of Buddhist Chung Wah Kornhill Primary School (BCWKPS) carried on progressing and improving with online materials prepared by our teachers, which supported learning needs in reading, writing, listening and speaking. Our aim is not only to cover the curriculum, but also to motivate our students to learn English in an enjoyable way.

With strong collaboration between NETs and local English teachers (LETs), the Space Town Programme obtained sustainability during the suspension period. A wide range of actions have been taken to help students keep up with their learning.

Online Videos and Assignments on Google Classroom

The NET filmed the shared reading, guided reading and process writing lessons for Units 4 to 6, namely 'A Paper Plate Mask', 'Where Am I?' and 'Fun Time at the Zoo'. The content of each unit was released across four weeks on *Google Classroom*. Students acquired the necessary knowledge and skills through these instructional videos. They were welcome to revisit the content multiple times according to their own learning pace.

Online Marking and Feedback

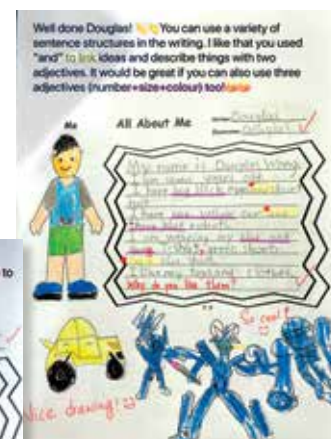
After students submitted their work to *Google Classroom*, LETs co-marked students' process writing online using a focus marking approach and provided written feedback to students. The NET and the ELTAs participated in the online feedback too, mainly offering motivational comments to students.

Zoom Live Tutorials

Online video lessons filmed by our NET and ELTAs functioned as lectures for lesson input, while *Zoom* live tutorials aim to provide a platform

My Lion Mask, Oswald, 1C

Fun Time at the Zoo, Douglas, 1B



Fun Time at the Zoo, Ethan, 1B



for class interaction. For example, the NET and a LET co-conducted a post-writing lesson to share students' work and invite peer evaluation.

Students and parents were encouraged to pinpoint the strengths and weaknesses in students' writing according to the success criteria stated in teacher focus marking.

Enrichment Reading Materials

The NET recorded the selected commercial books on video to encourage reading for enjoyment and support students' literacy development beyond the classroom. In each of these videos, three simple questions were embedded to consolidate students' reading skills while they read.

Online Co-planning Meetings

To review the teaching progress and prepare ahead, our school had centrally assigned co-planning periods for teachers in the form of *Zoom* conferencing. The NET and LETs met online weekly to discuss the design of video lectures, *Zoom* tutorials and students' assignments.

We have tried every means to keep in contact with students and parents while school was suspended. Students with insufficient hardware equipment were fully supported by our school, including lending iPads and SIM cards for Internet connection. We were very pleased to see students' keen participation in online learning and their achievements during this difficult period. The quality of students' writing has been impressive and their active and constructive involvement in the live tutorials has brought a new insight into their learning.

"None of us is as smart as all of us". It surely takes a collective effort from all the dedicated stakeholders, including teachers, students and parents, to achieve such a positive result.

**Caelan Cheung, English Panel Chair,
and Galina Papakule, NET, Buddhist Chung Wah
Kornhill Primary School**

