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# NET Scheme *news*

KEEPING STAKEHOLDERS INFORMED OF CURRENT TRENDS IN THE PNET SCHEME

*The new curriculum suggests about 40 percent of the English lessons be allocated to reading workshops. A question that most teachers are asking themselves is "How do I begin?" A good start would be the classroom.*

## How Do I Begin?

By Geoffrey Brown (AT)

HKRSS Tuen Mun Primary School is a full day school, located in Leung King Estate, Tuen Mun. The NET, who started working in the school in 2004 is Mrs. Barbara Haskey. She has been a NET teacher in Hong Kong for the last three years. Barbara and her colleagues have created a wonderful English room.

The room is a regular size classroom with a difference. The difference is how it is set up. As you can see in the photo, the students sit at the front of the room on small stools. Students and teachers are in close proximity. This closeness allows the teachers to tell stories and interact with students in a personal setting.

There is an area at the front of the classroom where students can sit and listen to a story. In the back of the classroom there is a desk for each student to work independently or in a group. The students are comfortable and can participate in a more intimate setting. Students can sit at their desk to work independently or play games with others.



## Raising the bar with the PLP-R

The PLP-R Programme is a pilot programme which was launched in

2004 in 104 schools. It is now in its second year and is being implemented in P1 –P3. The students go to a language-rich environment called the 'Reading Room' where they are all encouraged to actively participate in an English lesson with a reading focus.

Over the last year students have experienced Shared Reading, Storytelling, Reading Aloud, Guided and Independent Reading. They have learned to take risks when asking questions and used a range of visual aids, such as phonics fans to aid their learning. They have been engrossed both in Storytelling and when listening to books read by teachers. Most of all they are motivated to learn English through a wide range of stimulating activities that cater for their individual needs.

By Kirsten Freeman (AT)





# Parent Support on Home Reading 家長工作坊-家庭閱讀支援

By Antonia Chan (AT)

Children can learn a wealth of things at home that will prepare them for what they will have to do at school.  
家庭能為兒童提供豐富的學習元素，為學前作好準備。

Reading with parents is a valuable and enjoyable activity. It creates a bond between parent and child.  
親子閱讀是一項有價值及愉快的活動，家長參與兒童的學習能增進親子關係。

Parents have unique opportunities to provide good models and encourage good habits for learning.  
家長能為兒童提供學習的模範，並能鼓勵兒童建立良好的學習習慣。

How can parents support their child in learning to read at home?

家長應如何支援孩子在家中學習閱讀  
Be a good role model for your children.  
為孩子樹立良好的閱讀模範。

Provide a conducive home reading environment.  
為孩子提供閱讀的環境。

Read with your children and talk about books.  
與孩子閱讀圖書，與孩子討論圖書。

Support children with a large number of books at their appropriate level. Let them enjoy the success of reading.

父母應為孩子準備大量淺易和適合他們程度讀物，讓他們享受成功感。

Give praise, encouragement and support for achievement.

兒童在這個時期特別需要父母的讚賞、鼓勵和支持。

## Why do Home Reading?

### 為甚麼要進行家庭閱讀

Home reading provides opportunities to lay strong foundations for children to learn.

家庭能為兒童提供機會奠定良好的學習基礎。

Research shows parental involvement is correlated with children's success. 研究顯示兒童的學習成功與否與家長的參與有密切關係。

*'Visitors to the NET Section often remark upon the multicultural nature of the Advisory Teaching Team.'*

Accents from around the world are heard in the NET Section office. New Zealand and Australian accents mix with the cadences that are part of Canadian English. Others carry the accents of the South Asian or Hong Kong born English speaker. Various British regional accents are represented.

This diversity reflects the make up of the teachers working in the primary and secondary NET Schemes.



## What is a Native-speaking English Teacher?

Simon Tham  
(Chief Curriculum Development Officer)

*'In linguistic circles attempts to define a 'native-speaker' of a language have largely been abandoned.'*

In linguistic circles attempts to define a 'native-speaker' of a language have largely been abandoned. The elements caught up in the expression include;

- language of country of birth
- age of learning a language
- method of language acquisition (studied or acquired through immersion in infancy)
- order in which languages are learnt
- rank of fluency in languages spoken
- degree of fluency
- language of dreaming
- language used for counting and mathematical computations.

Some National English education schemes employing Native-speakers include an 'official' definition of what a Native speaker is. In Hong Kong this is not the case. Instead the Hong Kong NET Schemes (primary and secondary) are predicated upon the ability of the NETs employed to deliver the objectives of the Schemes. These include, providing opportunities for authentic communication, enriching the English language environment of schools and expanding the repertoire of teaching and learning strategies currently being applied.

Thus the NET Schemes have attracted people from many ethnic backgrounds. The image of the Anglo Celtic, mono-linguist NET is being enriched by Canadian, U.K. and Australian born or educated Chinese. There are also NETs from the Indian, Pakistani and African Diasporas. There are Maori, Mediterranean and Singaporean NETs. All have a role in working with Hong Kong teachers in bringing English to life for our students.



# Good Things Come In Small Packages

By Gary Knight(AT)



The EMB Advisory Teaching Team (ATT) travels far and wide to meet with teachers and students, share ideas and plan English language programmes with small schools all across the Hong Kong school district. These 'small schools', dotted throughout the countryside, are a vital link for many village communities. However 'small' does not describe the enthusiasm and opportunities these schools provide when it comes to English language programmes.

"Bigger is not always better", say the local teachers, and the AT support team can attest to that! Dedicated teachers offer authentic learning experiences in multi-age classrooms. Small class sizes allow for individualised, learner-centred instruction which cater for learner diversity. It's truly a 'community' of learners working together to provide meaningful English language experiences.

The Advisory Teaching Team is currently 'clustering' many of the small schools throughout Hong Kong in order to provide school-based English language camp experiences. Good things, and quality English language learning opportunities, do come in small packages.

Integral to Stage 2 of the PLP-R programme is the development of **Guided Reading**. This method exposes students to a variety of text types which must be at students' 'just right' or instructional level. Here students encounter a few challenges in decoding and comprehension, while being able to read with 90% to 95% word accuracy. Thus, the text stimulates learning without causing frustration.

While matching student-text levels is time consuming, teachers have found it invaluable in assessing individual students. As Ms Helena Wong, English Panel Chair in Lai Chi

## Let Reading be your guide

By Alice Wong (AT)

Kok Catholic Primary School remarked, "Guided Reading removes the "one size fits all" approach. It is so good to see students reading on their own by decoding new vocabulary and sounding out new words. I have noticed an excitement about reading that I haven't seen before." Teaching through Guided Reading has allowed teachers to create stronger links with students. They connect on a more personal level and hear each student's voice.

### Stages of the PLP-R Programme:

- Stage 1 Setting Up
- Stage 2 Implementation
- Stage 3 Integration
- Stage 4 Independence

## Culture as a Teaching Tool

By Lien Thich (NET)

For the third year in a row, HKFEW Wong Cho Bau Primary school, has celebrated Halloween as part of the NET scheme.

Despite the hectic schedule to conduct examinations during the last week of October, it was the school principal's mandate to carry out the annual tradition of celebrating this ghoulish festival. During Halloween Week, we created a chant that involved the student's participation to act out and recite the chant before students could receive any special treats. This encouraged students to build confidence in speaking and motivated them to practise using the English language outside the regular English class.

On our Halloween Day, students and teachers were invited to wear fantastic costumes and become a spectacle in the Halloween parade march as a finale to the celebration.

Since the introduction of Halloween to the school, celebrating western festivities has been highly anticipated and welcomed by the school, students, parents and teachers. The dissemination of the western culture to Hong Kong schools has opened up the doors to further understanding and appreciation for the English language.



The P1 students at Kei Wa School are busy learning the sounds and alphabetic principles of the English language. Learning alliterative sentences to go with each alphabet sound in the form of a song is a fun activity which promotes the concept of phonemic awareness.

They are also learning to blend the sounds to make words.

In this way students use the sounds to read, rather than trying to remember 'whole words'. This is a common situation for Hong Kong students and can delay reading proficiency.

Phonemic awareness is recognised by the US Reading Panel as the most efficient predictor of reading success. Therefore teaching it at a young age is crucial.

Kei Wa students love to learn and sing the alphabet song. They then participate in an activity identifying the sounds. The NET teacher, Pam Judge and the P1 teachers collaborate to plan and co-deliver series of lessons based on these principles.

By Pam Judge (NET)

## Phonemic Awareness



The Advisory Teaching Team gave up their lunch hour on Friday 4<sup>th</sup> November to provide local colleagues with a fascinating insight into Australian culture when the Social Committee held a belated Melbourne Cup Day 3 days after the event. A lavish luncheon and limitless warm Coca Cola fuelled the festivities as ATs gathered to watch a re-run of Australia's premier horse race.

In keeping with tradition, the ladies were given free rein to display their millinery skills as they paraded round the paddock before the off.

Pre-race favourite 'Pommie Pam' looked in good form and local Hong Kong filly 'Anne Anne' showed spirit. But it was Australian mare 'Naughty Nancie' who took first place in a photo finish.

But it wasn't all fun and games. Ever conscientious, the team took part in a Shared Reading session using a Big Book version of the form guide and Race Steward Mr Simon Tham delivered a short talk on 'The Race – Goers Guide to Choral Speaking.'

The festivities were marred when New Zealand runner 'Dawn's Surprise' had to be put down after breaking a fetlock in the rush for the sausage rolls.

# Everything stops for the Melbourne Cup!

By David Bartlett (AT)

## Cooperation Generation

By Dan Hannah (AT)

## One NET Good Bet

By Winnie Tong (NET)



If you ask me what I think of the one NET / one school policy, I would have to say that it is definitely a wonderful arrangement for both the NETs and students.

After having worked for one and half years in two schools in alternate weeks under the Primary NET Scheme, I am ecstatic to say "I'm now working as a full NET at North Point Government Primary P.M. School!"

With the NET serving this school exclusively I can enjoy quality time with the wonderful local English teachers and students who have made everything about being a NET so wonderful and enjoyable. Gone are the days when I had to rush through a lesson, squeeze in as much content as I could and hope earnestly that the students would still remember or be interested in what was learned two weeks ago.

Working in one school has enabled me to truly concentrate on building relationships with the local English teachers and working closely with them in catering to the learning needs of the students.

So far, the teachers and I have successfully created an English-speaking environment – with varying activities and opportunities – this has spawned active learners who see the need to learn to speak and do well in English.

On a further note, the Enhanced PNET Scheme has really helped in giving me a sense of belonging at NPGPS (PM).

For PNETs implementing an innovation is often not as simple as we think it should be.

In Hong Kong Key Stage One classrooms we often find seating based on a group of eight students. This is usually modified by changing the group size and the way students face. The result resembles a mix between group and whole class seating arrangements.

This presents a barrier to forming smaller groups because students need to be instructed individually on where to move their desks. The confusion, and time lost, puts some teachers off or they will suggest working with a group of five or more students. This may change a cooperative learning activity to 'group work'. Cooperative learning should be distinguished from what is called 'group work'. In cooperative learning a small group of two to four students provides more opportunities for interaction and greater accountability.

Why do students sit this way? In the 1980s an innovation called the 'Activity Approach' was implemented in KS1. Over the years though, the primary mode of instruction remained whole class teaching, however teachers felt obliged to keep the seating. Understanding the history of events challenges us to find new solutions. Not as simple as we thought it would be!

## The Newsletter Team

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