

## Developing a Community of Learners - Using Co-operative Learning (Primary 3)

### Argument:

A learning activity known as Jigsaw was tried out in the unit 'Animals'. The unit attempted to incorporate a cooperative learning strategy (jigsaw) into the lesson. This activity allowed students to **learn with support from interaction with peers** and **more capable persons** in the classroom. To illustrate the success of the activity, examples of students' work showing the improvement in students' writing are provided in the following paragraphs. Thus, **in an interactive classroom, individual differences are not necessarily limitations**; they can help **learning through enriching the perspectives** and experiences the learners have. This activity includes many different strategies to develop communities of learners including:

- cooperative learning,
- multiple intelligences,
- scaffolding of learning,
- portfolio assessment.

### Procedures/steps:

1. Teacher discussed with the students the chapter on '小畫眉'.
2. Teacher divided the class into five groups.
3. Each group was given a piece of reading material describing a particular animal (apes, dolphins, elephants, leopards and penguins).
4. The reading material was divided into several paragraphs and read by different members of the group.
5. Students took turns to explain the meaning of the paragraph so that everyone eventually grasped the information and became an "expert" on that kind of animal.
6. Groups were then reconstructed so that each group consisted of different 'animal experts'.
7. The new group had to work collaboratively to build an "Animal School" where different animals were assigned to different roles such as school principals, discipline masters... etc. Each group then reported back orally with sound reasons why each animal played a certain role.
8. After the jigsaw activity and the group presentation of 'Building an Animal School', the students were required to design a Christmas card for the classmate sitting next to them (as shown in Examples of Students' Work). Inside the card, the students had to describe their classmate using animals' characteristics.
9. After completing the Christmas card, students were asked to write about their subject teachers, again using the characteristics of the animals(as shown in the transcription of students' work).

### Evidence of Student Learning and Progressive Improvement in Students' Writing: (Evidence reflected by the 'Free Writing' Tasks after the 'Animal' Unit)

After the jigsaw activity and the group presentation of 'Building an Animal School', the students were required to design a Christmas card for the classmate sitting next to them as shown below. Inside the card, the students had to describe their classmate using animals' characteristics.

#### Examples of Students' Work



#### Outcome:

The three pieces of writing below were written by students of different language ability within the same class. Even the students with weaker performance could write reasonably and meaningfully.

*Transcription of students' work:*

**1. A more able student's work:**

《任老師像甚麼動物》26/12/2000

"任老師的性格像小白兔，像牠那麼可愛，性格像貓那麼溫馴。

聲音像海豚那麼甜美動人，氣力像大象那麼強壯。

生氣的時候，你像花豹那麼兇惡。

你的耳朵像鯊魚那麼靈敏。

你的腦袋像黑猩猩那麼聰明，你的動作像小鳥那麼美妙。"

**2. A less elaborated piece of work:**

《任老師像甚麼動物》23/12/2000

"老師很像海豚，因為牠很美麗像你，知識、聰明、溫柔、可愛和活潑，老師都有的，所以老師很像海豚。"

**3. An average piece of work:**

《形容老師像甚麼動物》24/12/2000

"我會形容老師像一隻溫柔的貓，因為你很好動，對我們很好，但是老師對男同學很惡，很像一隻兇猛的獅子，對女同學很和善，很像一隻溫柔的貓，所以我會形容老師你是貓。"

**Things that are helpful to improve students' performance in this lesson:**

- Designing meaningful and open-ended tasks that provide an opportunity for students with different talents and intelligence to get involved, thus helping the 'weaker' students to experience success
- Focussing on student learning processes rather than the products, for example, by asking students to explain to others what they are doing
- Using co-operative learning to help students of different abilities to work with each other
- Providing opportunities for each student to become an expert
- Introducing new material involving a range of skills to be learned
- Facilitating listening, participation and checking for understanding
- Providing opportunities for interaction, involvement and success for different students

**Source:**

The contents of the exemplar are extracted from the First Half-year Progress Report on "Catering Individual Differences through Developing a Community of Learners" jointly written by the University of Hong Kong and the Open University of Hong Kong consultant team. Students' work was contributed by the CHR & Missionary Alliance Sun Kei Primary School.