

Professional Development Programme on Promoting Reading across the Curriculum (RaC) in the Primary English Classroom

Dr Simon Chan

The University of Hong Kong

ssychan@hku.hk

Rundown of the workshop

Part 1— Reflection on experience in implementing RaC

Part 2 – Introduction to RaC

Part 3 – Cross-subject collaboration

Part 4 – (Demonstrations on) effective strategies to develop students' reading skills for more in-depth processing of the texts

Part 5 - Hands-on activity

Reflection on RaC implementation

Discuss the following questions with colleagues around you.

1. What is RaC to you? Why are you interested in it (so that you come to this workshop)?
2. Have you tried doing RaC in your classes? Any successful / not so successful experience to share?
3. What do you want to know (further) about RaC? What are your expected outcomes of this workshop?

Part 2 : Introduction to RaC

Two core themes of the workshop

- Reading across the Curriculum (RaC)—What is it and why is it relevant to us as English Teachers?
- RaC with the use of texts from different sources:
 - English textbook texts (Exemplar 1)
 - authentic texts (Exemplar 2)
 - real books (Hands-on task)

RaC and its relevance to ELT

Reading across the Curriculum (RaC)—What is it and why is it relevant to us as English Teachers?

Dual goals:

- To broaden students' knowledge base, help them **connect their learning experiences** and provide opportunities for **integrating and applying knowledge and skills developed in different KLAs/subjects** (ELE KLA CG, CDC, 2017, p.9)
- To provide opportunities for students to **develop a wide range of reading skills**, extend learning of the content and connect their learning experiences across KLAs (ELE KLA CG, CDC, 2017, p. 47)
- c.f. Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)

RaC and its relevance to ELT

In implementing RaC, teachers of the English Language Education KLA are encouraged to:

- **identify reading materials** in both print and non-print forms with suitable entry points (e.g. themes, text types, language features and vocabulary) for connecting students' learning experiences in different KLAs;
- **help students develop the reading skills and strategies** necessary for understanding and analysing language use in English texts written for general or academic purposes (e.g. text structures, rhetorical functions and vocabulary);

(ELE KLA CG, CDC, 2017, p.61)

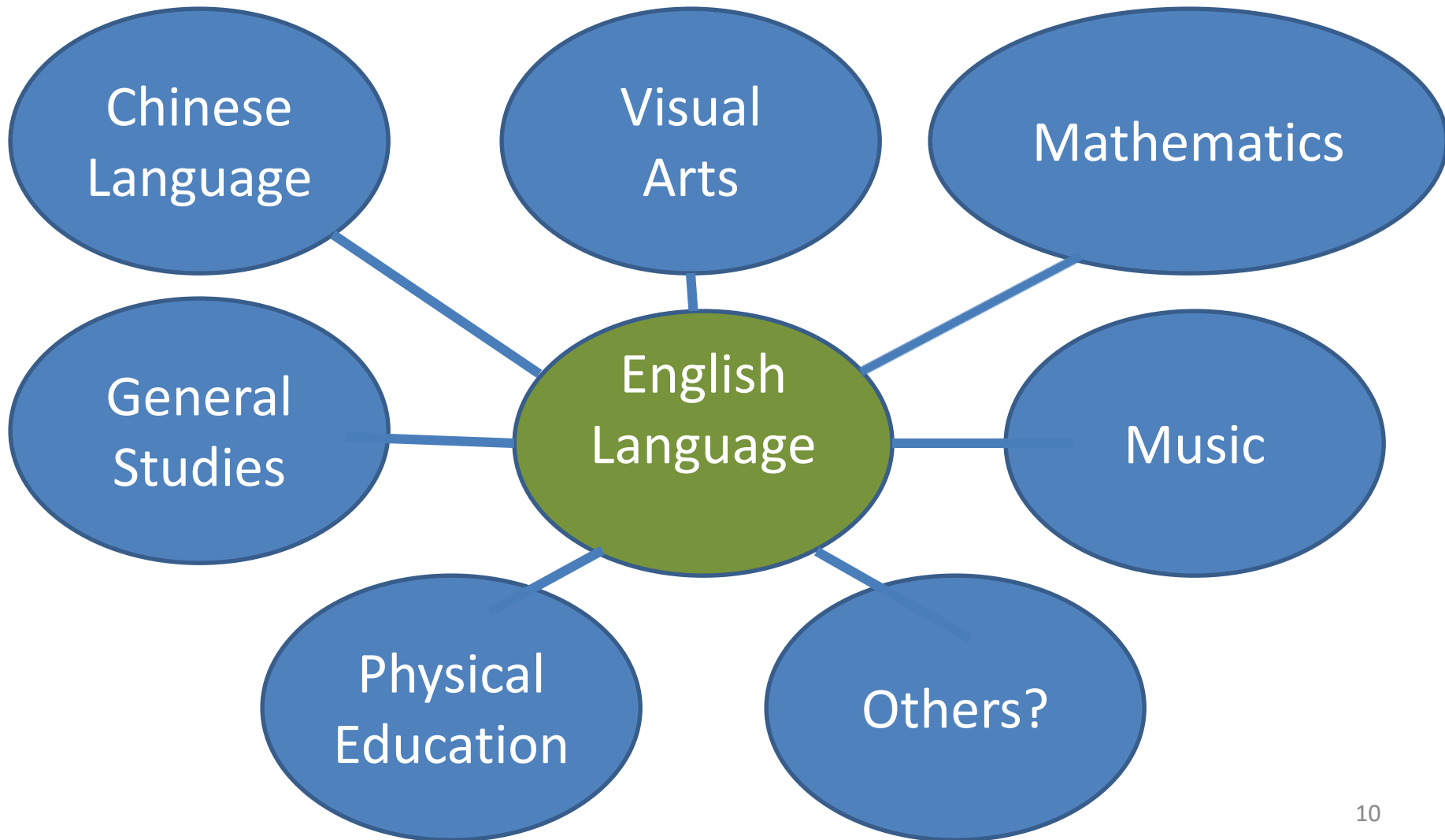
RaC and its relevance to ELT

- **design reading activities** that reinforce students' ability to integrate the knowledge, skills and learning experiences gained in different KLAs; and
- **collaborate with teachers of other KLAs** to develop learning activities that provide students with opportunities to consolidate the knowledge and skills acquired across KLAs, and develop the essential attributes that go beyond individual subjects or KLAs such as humanistic qualities and entrepreneurial spirit.

(ELE KLA CG, CDC, 2017, p.61)

Part 3 : Cross-subject Collaboration

Are there any common concepts or skills shared among these subjects?



Some common concepts or skills between English Language and other subjects for RaC activities:

- **Healthy Eating** in English Language and **Growth and Health** in GS; and
- **Making Things** in English Language and **Art Making** in VA

Possible modes of cross-subject collaboration with teachers of other KLAs:

- **Curriculum mapping**, designing and carrying out the cross-curricular learning activities or project work together;
- **Teaching the same theme/topic** at around the same time;
- Seeking **advice on the choice and appropriateness of reading materials** and the schedule of teaching a certain topic;
- Possible **collaboration with the school librarian**, e.g. book purchase and book display.

Points to note:

- It is important to
 - expose students to a variety of text types (e.g. on p. A14, 2017 ELE KLACG) [https://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/curriculum-development/kla/eng-edu/Curriculum%20Document/ELE%20KLACG 2017.pdf](https://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/curriculum-development/kla/eng-edu/Curriculum%20Document/ELE%20KLACG%202017.pdf)
 - develop students' awareness of text types, their purposes and characteristics, text features (format & layout) and organisation of information (rhetorical structures)
- Sources of reading materials (print/ non-print), e.g.
 - Theme-based Reading - Suggested Book Lists <https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/curriculum-development/4-key-tasks/reading-to-learn/contribution-of-book-titles/index.html>
 - Book Lists for RaC <https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/curriculum-development/kla/eng-edu/references-resources/RaC/RaCBooklists.html>
 - Bookflix (accessed through the public library web site)
 - Epic! web site: <https://www.getepic.com/>

Example 1 of RaC across subjects

Let's examine an example of connecting students' learning experiences in English Language and General Studies:

- Topic: Healthy Eating
- Input:
 - Knowledge and skills learnt from English Language - a leaflet "Eat smart, eat healthy" in a textbook (New Magic, 5A (pp. 24-25))
 - Knowledge and skills learnt from GS – healthy diet, food labels
 - Relevant books are recommended for students' extensive reading.

Task:

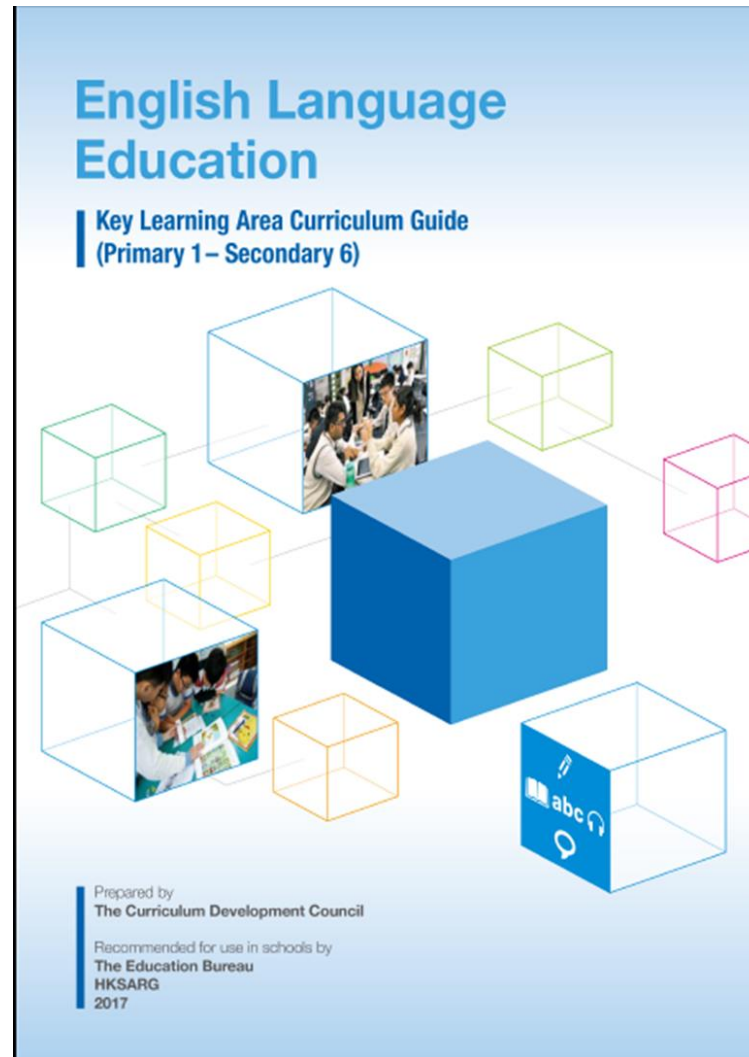
- Can you brainstorm another cross-curricular RaC learning activity? What can be a possible topic? Involving which subjects? What are the (types of) texts involved?

Example 2 of RaC across subjects

- Topic: Making things
- Input:
 - Knowledge and skills learnt from English Language – A newsletter “Science food fun” in a textbook (Longman English Leap, 5B (pp. 4-5))
 - Knowledge and skills learnt from VA – creating a piece of art work
 - Relevant books are recommended for students’ extensive reading.

Part 4 : (Demonstrations on) effective strategies to develop students' reading skills for more in-depth processing of the texts

What are those skills?



English Language Education

Key Learning Area Curriculum Guide
(Primary 1 – Secondary 6)



Prepared by
The Curriculum Development Council

Recommended for use in schools by
The Education Bureau
HKSARG
2017

The lists of language skills and language development strategies for KS1-4 are provided in Appendix 5.

Exemplar 1: RaC with the use of English textbook texts

Sample Teaching Unit on **RaC/WaC** based on an English textbook text

- Level: **Primary 5**
- Theme / Topic: **Healthy Eating**
- Lessons allocated: **8-10 lessons**
- Text type: **Leaflet**

Strategic and complementary use of textbook texts for RaC

Goal:

- Setting and achieving aims of the **GE Programme** and **Reading Workshops** for the school-based English Language curriculum to ensure **the development of students' literacy and critical thinking skills**

Means:

- By setting reading tasks based on the appropriate **skills for KS1/KS2 as listed in the curriculum guide** for the target learners, thereby developing their literacy and thinking skills through accomplishing those tasks

What do you think about the table-filling task that comes with the textbook text? Discuss the task with your partner.

Further questions could be set to develop students' reading skills and strategies necessary for processing the text in a more in-depth way.

Strategic and complementary use of textbook texts for RaC

Step 1 (Pre-reading):

“Firing up” the chosen textbook text for the target students, i.e. identifying the topic and the genre (features) of the text, activating their schemata for the while-reading stage

Have a quick look at the text for 5 seconds.
What kind of text is it? What make(s) you
think so?

Reading skills targeted:

- skim a text to obtain a general impression
and the gist or main ideas

Pre-reading

Now read this special version of the text.

Reading skills targeted:

- recognise the presentation of ideas through headings, paragraphing, spacing, italics, bold print and punctuation
- understand intention, attitudes and feelings conveyed in a text by recognising features such as the choice and use of language and images

What is the topic of this text?
How do you know?

There are two main parts in this text.
What are they?

Can you guess what is being discussed in
the text, based on these hints?

Let's look at the pictures and the words in the “Word building” section.

Do you know all of them? Circle them as they appear in the text as quickly as you can.
Raise your hand once you finish.

Reading skills targeted:

- work out the meaning of an unknown word or expression by using visual clues, context and knowledge of the world

Strategic and complementary use of textbook texts for RaC

Step 2 (While-reading):

Setting reading tasks using textbook information texts with reference to **the 2017 ELE KLACG and the English Language Curriculum Guide (P1-P6) (CDC, 2004)** and guiding students to accomplish such tasks through **purposeful questioning and feedback**

While-reading

1. Read lines 4-10. Which of the following is/are **TRUE**? Change the **FALSE** one(s) to make it/them become true.

- David eats fewer snacks than Jenny.
- David does not add any sugar in his drinks.
- David eats the same amount of fruit as Jenny.
- Jenny should eat less sweet food.
- Jenny should eat more vegetables.
- Jenny should drink fewer soft drinks.

What reading skills can we target through the previous item? How can we guide the students to reach the correct answers?

(Refer to the reading skills for KS2 in ELE KLACG)

- scan a text to locate specific information by using strategies such as looking at headings and repeated phrases [Key phrases to look for?] **Text grammar achieved**
- fewer, more, less, too much, enough etc.
- identify details that support the gist or main ideas [What's the main idea?]
- Sub-heading and thesis statement:
Whose lunch is healthier?

2. To avoid getting fat, we should not eat too many/too much...

- A. noodles and vegetables
- B. meat and sugar
- C. milk and cheese
- D. fish and bread

Reading skills targeted:

- understand the connection between ideas [Any clues for connecting meat and sugar?]
- The repeated phrase “...make you fat”

3. What does 'two plus three' (line 26) refer to? What does it mean to 'remember two plus three'?

Reading skills targeted:

- read written language in meaningful chunks
- work out the meaning of an unknown word or expression by using visual clues, context and knowledge of the world [What clues are there to guess the meaning of the phrase?]
- understand intention, attitudes and feelings conveyed in a text by recognising features such as the choice and use of language [What does the writer want to do with the use of the expression? Look at the second part of the sentence "... and you will become healthy"]

4. Why does the writer present the different food in the form of the 'food pyramid'?

Reading skills targeted:

- skim a text to obtain a general impression and the gist or main ideas [Which section to be skimmed?]
- identify details that support the gist or main ideas [What details can we use to infer?]
- work out the meaning of an unknown word or expression by using visual clues, context and knowledge of the world [Any features of the text can help us here? E.g. pictures?]

5. The heading of the text 'Eat smart, eat healthy' suggests that the text mainly talks about...

- A. eating delicious food
- B. looking smart
- C. doing healthy exercises
- D. choosing the right food

Reading skills targeted:

- skim a text to obtain a general impression and the gist or main ideas [Any clues for skimming through the text quickly?]
- recognise the format and language features of a variety of text types [How about the sub-headings and pictures typically found in the leaflet text type?]

RaC across subjects (Example 1 of Part 3 above)

Step 3 (Post-reading/Cross-curricular):

Engaging the students with a new task in which they **recycle their understanding of the content** of the textbook text as well as **the grammar and vocabulary items** they have noticed/the teacher has highlighted during the reading process

RaC and Reading to write

An extension to the reading task:

Goal:

- Setting and achieving aims of the **writing component** of the GE Programme for the school-based English Language curriculum to ensure the development of students' literacy skills, critical thinking and creativity

Means:

- **Strategic and complementary use of authentic information texts** with reference to students' learning needs and interests
- **Integrating content and language from various sources** of input, using graphic organisers to gather, brainstorm and organise information

Task: You are working in small groups to make some recommendations on some healthy snacks to be sold at the school's tuck shop. Read the 'food labels' of some snacks and decide which to recommend based on their health value.

“Reading some food labels”

From Reading to Writing: Which is healthy/ier?

A Graphic Organiser

Reading food labels and making suggestions

Food item	Nutritional information	Is it healthy?
1		
2		
3		

Writing some suggestions for a healthy diet

Making suggestions for a healthy diet.

- (1) _____

- (2) _____

“Making suggestions” (oral practice of suggestions written)

**- To David? For Ourselves?
For our Class/Schoolmates?**

We should eat oatmeal because it contains a lot of dietary fibre.

I should eat less chocolate because it contains a lot of sugar.

Tips for developing reading to write tasks:

- Teachers can use questioning, feedback and graphic organisers to help students process and write information texts.
 - Reading different information texts as “input”:
 - “Eat Smart, Eat Healthy”
 - Different food labels
 - Asking them questions to better understand the “content” of the information texts
 - Using graphic organisers to draft / organise ideas for the writing task

Tips for developing reading to write tasks

- It is important to show students how to use appropriate formats, conventions and language features in writing information texts.
 - Writing task: Give suggestions to your friends on buying healthier snack (chocolate, instant oatmeal, sweet corn).
 - Language features:
 - The tuck shop **should sell** _____ . / You **should eat** _____ .
 - You **need** _____ .
 - More advanced structure: You'd better buy / should eat / need _____ **because** _____ .

Food for thoughts:

- How can we plan an RaC teaching unit with textbook texts and theme-related information texts in the GE programme and Reading Workshops?
 - **Material selection**
- How can we make good use of the texts to set meaningful reading and writing tasks, i.e. using reading as input for writing?
 - **Material adaptation**
- The end products for RaC activities could be **diversified** as long as they provide opportunity for students to recycle what they have learnt across KLAs, i.e. apart from writing tasks, the products could be **oral presentations, production of multimodal texts, projects, performance tasks (e.g. dramas and role-play)** and so on.

An Overview of 'Genre and Purpose'

Text / Activity	Text-type	Purpose
“Healthy Lunch”	leaflet (information report)	to give information
food labels	labels (information report / description)	to give information about food
“Making suggestions”	suggestion	to suggest / advise

Selecting textbook materials for RaC

- The topic “*healthy diet / lifestyle*” is a very popular topic among primary schools / teachers.
- It offers an entry point for integrating reading activities into the school-based curriculum as well as other KLAs.
- There is a range of extra resources / materials / aids available under this theme.

Adapting textbook materials for RaC

- The text is chosen not just for its teaching value. It can demonstrate how some “far-from-perfect” materials can be adapted for use in the classroom using an RaC approach.
- Many of the available textbooks contain examples of narratives. Although narratives are common and can be used as a good starting point, students also need to broaden their **exposure to non-fiction texts**.
- By including RaC texts and activities, teachers can provide their students with a **more balanced ‘language diet’**.
- This also allows English teachers to start with something we are (more) familiar with / have to teach and cover, while still engaging students in reading across text-types and topics.

Exemplar 2: RaC with the use of authentic (-like) texts (Example 2 of Part 3 above)

Sample Teaching Unit on RaC based on an authentic(-like) text

- Level: **Primary 5/6**
- Theme / Topic: Fun things to make
- Lessons allocated: **2-3 lessons**
- Text type: **Procedural texts**

Let's do things differently this time...

- I'm not going to demonstrate the whole teaching unit to you, but would engage you in some awareness-raising activities instead, through which you'll get some ideas for planning your own RaC teaching units.

Let's take a reading challenge first!

I'm going to show you a text for **THREE SECONDS ONLY!** Try to read as much of it as you can and see if you can identify the topic and genre of the text.

- What type of text is it?
- What is its topic?
- How did we identify the above in such a short time?

- Now read Version 2 of the text (on the handout).
- Is it the same as or different from the previous one?
- If you are to suggest one of the two versions for your KS2 learners to read, which one would you pick? Why?

- Now let's watch a final version.
- Which of the three versions would you use to build an RaC activity? Why? What kind(s) of activity is it?

Food for thoughts:

Adopting and adapting authentic texts for RaC:

- Use of multimodal texts to allow the students sense the meanings of the text from different channels
- Integration of texts so that the texts themselves scaffold each other
- Building explicit links between grammar and vocabulary patterns and the meaning functions they serve in various common RaC genres, i.e. **genre-based pedagogy**

Discussion:

How does the reading text connect the GE programme with the other subjects?

What can be a cross-curricular learning activity following the reading stage?

Food for thoughts:

Adopting and adapting authentic texts for RaC:

- How about using multimodal texts (even non-print ones) from websites like *YouTube* and *instructables.com* and integrate those with the procedure texts written in academic style on the topic 'making things'?

Genre-Based Pedagogy

What is it and how is it related to RaC?

A systematic framework for guiding reading and writing texts:
The “Genre Egg” Model (adapted from Rose, 2012)

Part 5 : Hands-on activity

Application Time

Time to apply what we've learnt...

Hands-on Task: RaC with the use of real books

1. Get ourselves into groups of 3-4.
2. Design an RaC unit based on the real book assigned to the group, using the suggested template. Make sure there are connections with another subject/KLA (10-15 min)
3. Share our ideas with the fellow groups (5-10 min)

A few principles for you to consider...

- That the real books are available to local schools (e.g. class readers, books at the school library or books from the Internet)
- That the themes / topics of the real books can be linked to the other subjects/KLAs
- That the real books can be easily adapted, and appropriate tasks and activities can be designed accordingly.

*No one knows your students
better than you do!*

Some RaC suggestions based on a reader

Promoting Values Education through RaC

Book title: How to Have a Green Day
Author: Jenny Alexander
Publisher: Pearson Education Limited
ISBN: 9780582461772

How to Have a Green Day

Connecting learning experiences between GE Programme & Reading Workshops (KS2 Module: Taking care of our earth)

Highlights of the book:

- broad cross-curricular content knowledge that allows students to link their learning experiences from English to General Studies
- students could learn about the **text type features** of an information book and learn to become an independent reader with the help of glossary

Suggested activities:

KS1: Poster/signage design

KS2: 'Bring Your Own Bag' Campaign (Canvas bag design)

Green tips are organised in chapters according to time and settings.

How about building some reading items for developing reading strategies?

Read P.6-7. These are tips on:

- A. Eating breakfast
- B. Watching TV
- C. Getting dressed
- D. Saving electricity

Reading skill targeted: Main ideas

How about building some reading items for developing reading strategies?

Read P.9. Before bottles and jars are recycled, they need to be _____.

- A. kept in boxes
- B. wrapped with old newspapers
- C. put on breakfast dishes
- D. cleaned with water

Reading skill targeted: Specific information

A wrap up

- Learning and teaching is a dynamic, organic process. There is no “quick-fix”, or any SINGLE best way.
- However, there are a few principles that we can apply when we select appropriate reading materials to illustrate how RaC tasks can be designed.

What we have discussed in the workshop

- Principles of RaC—emphasis on content and language integrated learning (CLIL) and identifying common communicative functions and language patterns in addition to text types
- Selection of texts for building RaC tasks, recommendation of sources of texts, and multimodal resources, e.g. readers for young learners with authentic information texts such as posters
- Incorporation of RaC texts in the General English curriculum, with specific foci on the development of reading skills as well as grammatical and lexical awareness
- Connecting primary students' learning experiences, within and outside English lessons
- Designing language tasks (e.g. reading, reading to write) based on RaC texts