

## **Promoting Assessment as Learning in the Development of Writing Skills (Secondary 4-6)**

### **Introduction**

This example focuses on how assessment *as* learning can be built on the good practice of assessment *for* learning and implemented in schools to improve students' writing performance. It illustrates how the teacher supports students in acquiring and applying a range of metacognitive skills and engages them in reviewing and improving their writing skills through:

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

### **Planning Stage**

- The following assessment practices have been adopted in a secondary school to create a favourable environment conducive to promoting “assessment as learning” prior to the tryout:
  - students are engaged in conducting peer-assessment regularly in writing and speaking tasks to develop the habit of reflection;
  - success criteria for all writing tasks are shared with students to familiarise them with the assessment objectives; and
  - timely and quality feedback, as well as concrete suggestions for improvement, is provided by teachers in each writing task to help students understand their own strengths and weaknesses, as well as how to improve their writing.
- The implementation period was strategically set between two school terms to provide opportunities for students to review their writing in Term 1 to set goals for Term 2. The period spanned throughout the second term and involved three pieces of writing to allow ample time for students to practise applying the metacognitive skills to monitor their progress in writing.

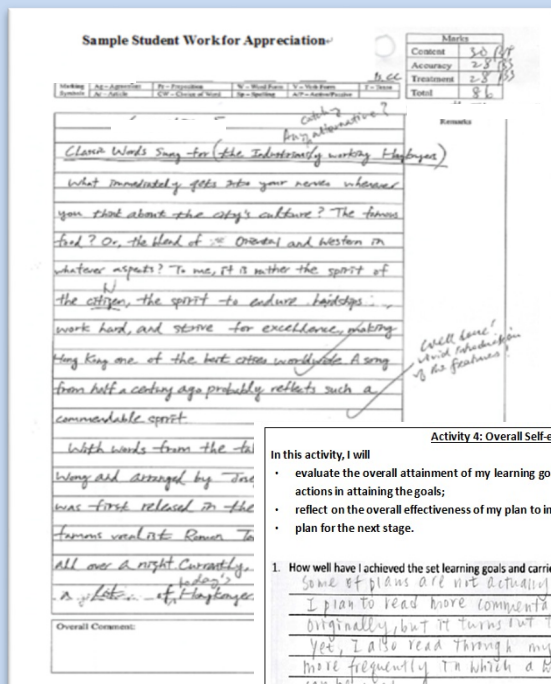
**Learning and Teaching Process** **Impact on Learning**

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

The teacher

- selects good sample student writing and explains the strengths with textual evidence; and
- demonstrates, through thinking aloud, how to appreciate good writing by focusing on the best parts on the following:
  - content (e.g. presentation of arguments with supporting details and examples, giving precise background information)
  - organisation (e.g. using eye-catching and specific sub-headings, using effective topic and concluding sentences); and
  - language and style (e.g. using rhetorical questions to enhance presentation, using persuasive language)

- Students are motivated to read and learn from the outstanding writing by their peers in a supportive learning environment.
- Students develop their language and critical thinking skills through appreciating and analysing the outstanding writing in terms of content, organisation, and language and style.
- Students learn metacognitive skills through teacher's demonstration in the learning process.



**Activity 4: Overall Self-evaluation**

In this activity, I will

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

1. How well have I achieved the set learning goals and carried out the proposed plan?  
 Some of plans are not actually carried out, for example, I plan to read more commentaries and magazines originally, but it turns out that I didn't do it. Yet, I also read through my vocabulary notes more frequently in which a wider range of words can be used.

2. What problems have I encountered in the process and how did I overcome them?  
 The major problems are about the time management. Most of the time I do not have enough time to complete the composition while the content is not finished thoroughly. The planning before writing the composition can be improved.

3. List two ways I think I have developed or grown as a result of this plan for improving writing skills?  
 I have developed to be more selective about the content. A lot of things can be written in the composition, however, I learnt to be selective which only includes the important stuff. I also learnt to use more cohesive devices and topic sentence to improve the connection between paragraphs.

4. What am I still not sure about and need advice on?  
 I need advice on the language about how to use more phrases and different inversion patterns to improve my delivery in the composition.

The teacher

- guides students to review their own writing assignments completed in the previous term and the teacher's feedback;
- helps students reflect on their strengths and weaknesses in writing and identify their learning needs;
- supports students to formulate personalised learning goals on content, organisation, and language and style and propose possible actions for each; and
- provides constructive feedback for students on the appropriateness of the learning goals and the feasibility of the proposed actions to facilitate their revision of learning goals and actions.

- Students take greater ownership over their own learning as they identify their own learning needs and plan actions for making improvement.
- Students develop and practise their metacognitive skills through expressing their thoughts and analysis in writing and revising their plans to incorporate feedback from the teacher.

**Activity 2: Self-reflection and Goal-setting**

In this activity, I will:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Areas for improvement	Learning goals	Proposed actions
content	<b>Goal 1 (Content)</b> - use thesis statement to follow the content - Elaborate the points with more evidence, ideas and personal experience	- Conclude the passage with a topic sentence - Explain views with evidence - Read more newspaper

Language	<b>Goal 2 (Language and Style)</b> - Concluding & Persuasive tone	- Read different styles of article
Organization	<b>Goal 3 (Organisation)</b> - Use connective devices/topic sentence/ sentence structures	- Raise the vocabulary bank and the 300 phrases

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

**Part 2: Self-evaluation during the Learning Process**

Throughout the three pieces of writing, the teacher

- encourages students to focus on their personalised learning goals, step up their efforts and take actions to attain them in the pre- and while- writing stages;
- provides opportunities for students to evaluate their attainment of learning goals and the effectiveness of their proposed actions with the use of a progression chart in the post-writing stage; and
- supports students to formulate further actions necessary for improving their writing skills.

- Self-directed learning takes place when students keep track of their progress throughout the three writing tasks.
- The use of graphic organisers helps students visualise their evaluation of the attainment of learning goals and the effectiveness of the proposed actions.

Learning goals	Proposed actions	Writing 1 Colour your achievement of learning goals	Writing 2 Colour your achievement of learning goals	Writing 3 Colour your achievement of learning goals
<b>Goal 1</b> - Use more evidence, statistic, news article, personal experiences to support my ideas and content	- Read more Times magazine and English newspaper such as Standard and SCMP - Read more English books with different genres instead of just fiction			
<b>Goal 2</b> - Use a wider range vocabulary & sentence structure - Examples: Inversion, Imagery, Rhetorical question	- Read the vocabulary notebook and notes more often - Read more English books, newspaper, magazines, movies and documentaries			
<b>Goal 3</b> - Establish better cohesion between paragraphs - Set an eye-catching and comprehensive title	- Read more news articles and news commentaries - Read more sample essay and different styles of articles such as letter			

My progress in writing 1	My progress in writing 2	My progress in writing 3
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<b>Self-reflection</b> - I am not working hard enough to read those news article and to learn a wider variety and higher level of vocabulary. - There may be some irrelevant information in the passage.	<b>Self-reflection</b> - The description of how the donation will be used is not specific though. - More points can be added in the practical measures	<b>Self-reflection</b> - Time management should be improved as the part about the importance of debating skills in one's life was not mentioned comprehensively and deeply. - The performance of the two classes can be more precise and concise, need to mention about the floor speakers as well. - Background of the adjudicators should be provided.
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**Part 3: Overall Evaluation**

The teacher

- guides students to evaluate their overall attainment of learning goals and the effectiveness of their actions, and reflect on problems encountered and actions taken to overcome them.
- provides constructive feedback for students to plan for further actions to make improvement.

**Activity 4: Overall Self-evaluation**

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4. What am I still not sure about and need advice on?  
 I need advice on the language about how to use more phrases and different invention patterns to improve my delivery in the composition.

5. What am I going to work on or improve next?  
 I will work on the better time management and better preparation or planning works before starting the composition. Furthermore, I will also have to read more sample essays and learn the good things about them, for example, how others illustrated the performances of the debaters in compe & bring out the food for thought about the importance of debating skills in one's life.

6. Response from my teacher:

- Students develop the skills and confidence in assessing their own strengths and weaknesses and a positive attitude towards improving their language skills.
- A growth mindset, which advocates that success can be achieved through making appropriate efforts, is promoted among students to empower them to take the initiative to improve their own learning.

*Some of the activities have been tried out in St Mark's School. We thank the school for sharing their experience.*