

# *Let's Make a Difference:*

## **Unleashing Students' Potential in Learning English at Primary Level**

**S**tudents are unique individuals. They have different motivation, interests, personalities, abilities, learning styles and socioeconomic background, and thus they have diverse learning needs. These needs may vary at different stages of learning. Therefore, helping students of different abilities to unleash their potential through effective adaptation of curriculum, a variety of learning, teaching and assessment strategies, as well as appropriate selection of learning materials and activities is one of the most important tasks for schools and teachers.

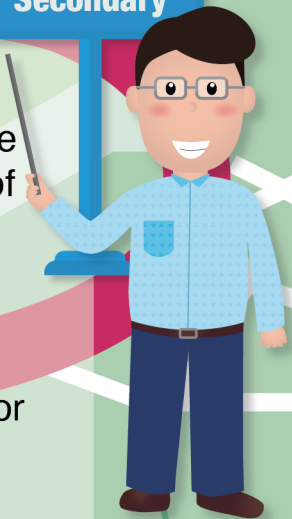
**Primary**



In respect of learning and teaching English Language, most schools have accumulated experience in catering for students' diverse learning needs such as adopting graded learning tasks and activities, arranging remedial and enrichment classes and offering summer bridging programmes. However, as English Language teachers, do you still have questions about other effective strategies to better cater for students' needs?

In this leaflet, we will explore more strategies to cater for learner diversity and to address students' diverse learning needs at different key learning stages.

**Secondary**



**Kindergarten**



# Addressing Students' Diverse Learning Needs at Different Key Stages of Learning

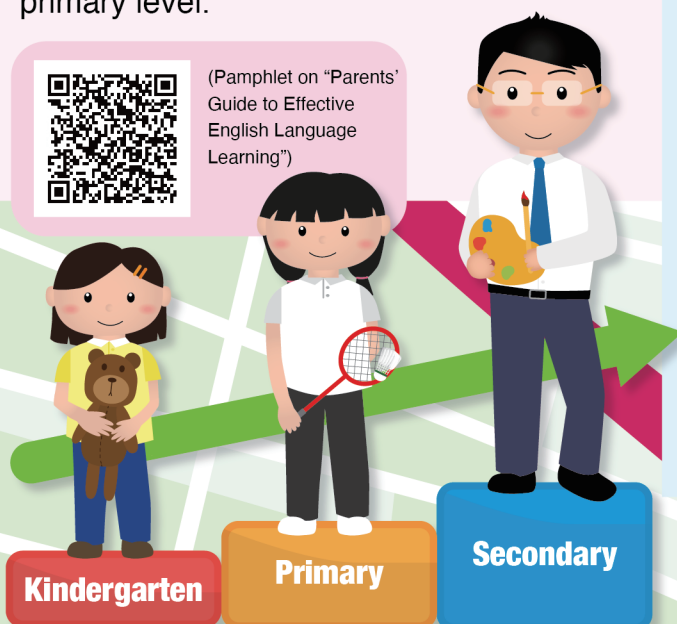
Progressing from one key stage to the next, students need to adapt to changes in the learning mode and the learning environment. For example, when children move from the less structured environment in a kindergarten to a more formal learning environment in a primary school, they may face challenges from longer school hours and more subject-based learning. When Primary 6 students are promoted to Secondary 1, the medium of instruction for some non-language subjects may change from Chinese to English. Besides, self-directed learning skills and higher-order thinking skills become more important in secondary education. Building a strong interface between different key stages of learning is thus essential to help students gain confidence in learning and using English, and progressively develop their independent learning capabilities. There are some suggestions to address the interface issue at school level, curriculum level and classroom level.

## At School Level

- ✓ Enhance mutual understanding of the curriculum and pedagogical practices through professional exchange activities with kindergartens and secondary schools, and adjust the school curriculum and teaching strategies to strengthen the interface between different key stages.
- ✓ Promote home-school cooperation by organising parents' meetings to explain the school English Language curriculum and solicit parental support. EDB's pamphlet on "Parents' Guide to Effective English Language Learning" is useful in helping parents understand how to support their children to learn English effectively at primary level.



(Pamphlet on "Parents' Guide to Effective English Language Learning")



Kindergarten

Primary

Secondary

## At Classroom Level

- ✓ Use more games, role-play, songs, nursery rhymes, stories instead of written assessments (e.g. dictations, tests, examinations) to help students consolidate what they have learned in the first few months of Primary 1.
- ✓ Adopt different ways of conducting dictation to develop students' language skills progressively, e.g. picture dictation, theme-based free dictation, dicto-comp/dictogloss.
- ✓ Adopt effective strategies for teaching reading skills and higher-order thinking skills, e.g. use storytelling, reading aloud and shared reading with lower primary students, while more supported reading and independent reading with upper primary students.
- ✓ Engage students in meaningful activities and extended tasks or projects to provide opportunities for them to communicate and express their own ideas for a variety of purposes and audience, and practise the integrative use of language in a multimedia environment.



(Resource package on "Using Dictation to Develop Pupils' Listening and Writing Skills")

## At Curriculum Level

- ✓ **Strengthen vertical continuity of curriculum development across key stages through adopting holistic curriculum planning**
  - ➔ Progressive development of language skills - Make use of reference tools such as the **Learning Progression Framework (LPF) for English Language** when planning the school curriculum to facilitate a balanced coverage of language skills within and across year levels.
  - ➔ Progressive development of language development strategies – Make reference to Appendix 5 of the *English Language Education Key Learning Area Curriculum Guide (Primary 1 – Secondary 6)* (CDC, 2017) to help students enhance their capabilities to become independent and self-directed learners progressively.
- ✓ **Create a supportive and English-rich learning environment**
  - ➔ Appoint experienced English teachers to be Primary 1 English teachers to help students lay a better foundation for extensive use of English at the early stage, and sustain their interest in English in the new environment.
  - ➔ Continue to create an environment conducive to English learning at the whole-school level, for example, organising English Day, Reading across the Curriculum Week and related cross-curricular activities, to strengthen students' English competencies and help them build a solid foundation for secondary education.
- ✓ **Promote reading in schools**
  - ➔ Introduce a variety of narrative texts including multimodal texts and also non-fiction in lower primary classes to motivate students to read and develop their reading skills.
  - ➔ Expose upper primary students to a wider variety of themes and text types, in particular information texts, using both print and non-print resources.
  - ➔ Implement **Reading across the Curriculum (RaC)** in upper primary classes to connect students' learning experiences in different Key Learning Areas and prepare them for secondary education.
- ✓ **Infuse enabling skills into the school curriculum**
  - ➔ Teach **phonics** in meaningful contexts with focuses on letter sounds appropriate to students' level.
  - ➔ Introduce a range of **vocabulary building skills** to students across year levels, e.g. word formation, word collocations, word families.



(LPF for English Language)



(Leaflet on "Promotion of Reading in Schools")



(Leaflet on RaC)



(Resource kit on "Teaching Phonics at Primary Level")



(Resource package on "Enhancing English Vocabulary Learning and Teaching at Primary Level")



# Debunking Myths about Learning and Teaching

## Myth 1

English teachers often find that they do not have enough time to teach as they have to address so many initiatives, e.g. catering for learner diversity, promoting Reading across the Curriculum, in addition to teaching the curriculum content.



- Q Learning should not be confined to English lessons or to the school itself. Students' learning time includes lesson time, the time outside class at school and outside school including holidays. In catering for learner diversity, schools should make flexible use of students' learning time to plan a balanced curriculum with space to foster whole-person development and a healthy lifestyle through, for instance, cross-curricular activities, e-learning and life-wide learning activities.
- Q The school English Language curriculum should be planned more coherently to connect students' learning experiences and avoid unnecessary repetitions of learning arrangements. For example, the curriculum components of the General English Programme and the Reading Workshops should be integrated where appropriate and cross-curricular collaboration to promote RaC should be encouraged.



## Myth 2

To stretch the ability of more able students, some schools simply outsource pull-out enrichment programmes to educational organisations.

- Q When designing enrichment activities for more able students, schools should build on their previous experience. They should adopt holistic curriculum planning through different activities conducted during or after class time, inside or outside the school premises to enhance the depth and breadth of students' learning and address their learning needs.
- Q Schools should consider the following when commissioning pull-out programmes:
  - ✓ the experience and readiness of educational organisations;
  - ✓ setting appropriate objectives for the programmes based on students' needs;
  - ✓ allowing training for students with outstanding performance in specific areas;
  - ✓ connecting learning activities with the school English Language curriculum to extend students' learning experiences and nurture their capabilities and attitude for self-directed learning; and
  - ✓ devising concrete success criteria to assess the effectiveness of programmes.
- Q Similarly, pull-out intervention programmes for weaker students should be arranged through holistic curriculum planning.
- Q Schools can also make use of English-related life-wide learning activities to further develop the capabilities of more able students/arouse the interest of less able students in learning English and facilitate their whole-person development.



# Effective Strategies to Cater for Learner Diversity in the Primary English Language Curriculum: Planning, Implementation and Evaluation

- ✓ Trim learning content and materials, make additions or a combination of both
- ✓ Develop appropriate tasks for the less able students to make progress, and challenging tasks for the more able students to expand and enrich learning experiences
- ✓ Incorporate e-learning to address students' needs, engage students in active and self-paced learning and create more opportunities for co-operative learning
- ✓ Devise remedial, intervention and enrichment programmes for students of different abilities
- ✓ Use assessment data and evaluation data to inform planning and teaching



The areas for evaluation should align with the objectives of the measures. Here are some examples:

- ❓ Are students motivated to learn English?
- ❓ Are students confident in using English to communicate with others?
- ❓ Are students provided with opportunities to learn from peers?
- ❓ Are students engaged in active and self-directed learning?
- ❓ Do students, including both able and less able ones, show improvement in assessment results?
- ❓ Is teachers' capacity to apply strategies to cater for learner diversity enhanced?

Both quantitative and qualitative data could be collected and analysed to inform curriculum planning.



## Adopting appropriate learning and teaching materials

- ⚙️ Adopt appropriate texts that incorporate different modes of representation and provide multisensory learning experiences to cater for students' diverse learning styles
- ⚙️ Make use of open-ended tasks and graded learning tasks and activities
- ⚙️ Provide students with the same tasks and activities, but vary the expected output of different students



## Providing support and scaffolding

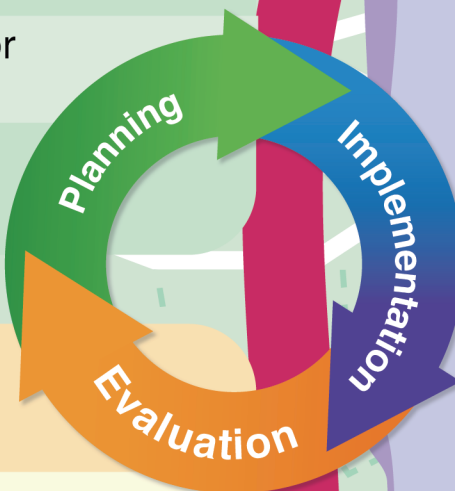
- ⚙️ Connect the content and learning activities to students' life experiences
- ⚙️ Break tasks into small steps to facilitate understanding and sequence the steps in the tasks
- ⚙️ Employ a variety of strategies to enhance interactive learning (e.g. different levels of questioning, giving timely feedback, co-operative learning)
- ⚙️ Provide different support for students with different learning styles (e.g. visual cues for visual learners)
- ⚙️ Make use of flexible grouping (e.g. same ability and mixed-ability grouping) according to the nature and purpose of the tasks to promote peer learning
- ⚙️ Vary the amount of teacher input and support to provide extra help for the less able students and challenge the more able ones (e.g. providing scaffolding, setting challenging yet manageable tasks)

## Promoting assessment for/as learning

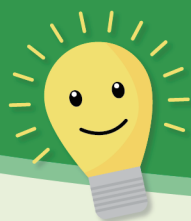
- ⚙️ Promote formative assessment to provide effective and timely feedback
- ⚙️ Adopt different modes of assessment to address the diverse needs of students
- ⚙️ Help students develop the necessary skills for self- and peer assessment, through which students can develop a better understanding of the learning objectives and assessment criteria, and what is expected of them
- ⚙️ Guide students to monitor their own learning and take ownership

## Using e-learning repertoire effectively

- ⚙️ Engage students in active and self-directed learning through the use of IT to facilitate peer learning and enhance learner autonomy
- ⚙️ Use e-assessment such as the Student Assessment Repository (STAR) platform accessible at <https://star.hkedcity.net/en/> to help identify students' strengths and weaknesses and facilitate analysis of their performance







# Effective Strategies to Cater for Learner Diversity in the Primary English Language Curriculum: Some Practical Tips



Supporting students with diverse learning styles	Supporting students with special educational needs in the mainstream English classroom	Maximising the potential of gifted students in the mainstream English classroom	Questioning and providing quality feedback	Leveraging e-learning	Adopting different modes of assessment
<p><b>Visual/auditory learners</b> e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ introduce a variety of multimodal texts with images and/or sounds</li> <li>✓ use colour coding to highlight and explain target language items</li> <li>✓ use songs to provide input on target language items</li> <li>✓ use diagrams, models or charts to visualise written information</li> <li>✓ use visual aids to consolidate learning</li> </ul> <p><b>Kinesthetic learners</b> e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ use games to increase students' motivation and consolidate learning, e.g. board/card games, sequencing pictures, telling the story</li> <li>✓ engage students in role-play activities for meaningful use of target language items and development of generic skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Provide clear instructions</b> for students by introducing tasks with a clear and simple framework, setting goals at the beginning, and putting emphasis on important information</li> <li>✓ <b>Help students in writing</b> through reducing assignments that require too much copying, providing manipulatives such as word cards and planning and writing frameworks, encouraging shared note-taking among students, and allowing students to submit audio or video recordings in lieu of written work occasionally</li> <li>✓ <b>Help students in reading</b> through providing visual aids, using suitable adaptive devices such as screen magnifiers, raising students' phonological awareness, limiting the number of new ideas from a text in each lesson, and guiding students to summarise what has been read</li> <li>✓ <b>Adjust assessment arrangements</b> through making flexible assessment arrangements and giving simple, direct and clear assessment instructions with examples</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Allow flexibility with the school curriculum</b> to address differences in the depth, breadth and pace of learning through implementing a multi-level curriculum, developing a curriculum that <b>encourages thinking, enquiry and self-reflection</b>, sourcing learning resources to stretch gifted students' potential, and designing diversified learning tasks</li> <li>✓ <b>Promote creativity and original thinking</b> through equipping students with strategies to generate new ideas, reorganise knowledge, seek alternatives, evaluate ideas and solutions, and decide how to present their work</li> <li>✓ <b>Encourage students to pursue projects</b> based on their interests and abilities and make enquiry into more complex concepts to develop their problem-solving skills, research skills, language skills, and to produce ideas critically and creatively</li> <li>✓ <b>Empower students to assume ownership of their learning</b> through guiding students to set individual goals, choose appropriate learning strategies and achieve the goals within a reasonable time frame, and developing students' language learning strategies and metacognitive skills</li> </ul>	<p><b>Effective questioning</b> involves</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ the use of a variety of question types to motivate students, to check their knowledge and comprehension, and to stimulate their higher-order thinking</li> <li>✓ allowing wait-time for students to process the question and formulate the answer</li> <li>✓ provision of cues to help students understand the questions or stimulate them to think</li> </ul> <p><b>Quality feedback</b> should be</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ positive and timely</li> <li>✓ clear and easy to understand</li> <li>✓ linked to the learning intentions and success criteria</li> <li>✓ able to help students identify their strengths and weaknesses and make improvement with practical and feasible suggestions</li> </ul> <div data-bbox="1602 1638 1958 1806">  <p>(Facilitator's Guide on "Promoting Assessment for Learning in English Language Education at Primary Level")</p> </div>	<p>e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ use e-learning platforms to upload materials for pre-lesson preparation and facilitate peer learning</li> <li>✓ adopt the "Flipped Classroom" strategy to engage students in pre-lesson preparation at their own pace and create space for quality in-class interaction</li> <li>✓ use e-learning tools in lessons to check students' understanding and give timely feedback</li> <li>✓ deploy multimodal texts to provide varied input (e.g. e-books with animations, audio narration and/or interactive activities)</li> <li>✓ use e-learning tools to add variety to pen-and-paper assignments, e.g. creating multimodal texts, sharing views on e-platforms</li> </ul>	<p>Adopt diversified modes of assessment to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ match the learning objectives and processes</li> <li>✓ provide opportunities for students with different capabilities and learning styles to demonstrate their learning outcomes</li> </ul> <p>Examples include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ shared writing</li> <li>✓ process writing</li> <li>✓ projects</li> <li>✓ portfolios</li> <li>✓ oral presentations</li> <li>✓ performance tasks</li> <li>✓ learning tasks and activities</li> <li>✓ assessment tasks</li> <li>✓ online assessments</li> </ul> <p>Strike a balance between formative and summative assessments</p>

