

# NET

SCHEME NEWS

2021 Spring  
issue 39

**LOOKING BACK**  
**LOOKING AHEAD**  
**& EMBRACING**  
**CHANGE**





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This newsletter is prepared by the NET Section, CDI, EDB. All comments and suggestions on the newsletter can be sent to [jeremygray@edb.gov.hk](mailto:jeremygray@edb.gov.hk).

# We Will Never Walk Alone on This Journey of Change

"Change is the only constant in life." This is the wisdom Greek philosopher, Heraclitus, shared over two thousand years ago. Indisputable as it is as a fact of life, few of us would claim we are all the time ready for change, let alone embrace it. Seen in a positive light, this innate reservation that we share has its merits. It prompts us to pause and examine the what, the how and, most importantly, the why of change. It encourages us to draw lessons from our past experiences related to change – whether we were told to change, preparing ourselves for change or leading change.

In our profession, we change because we see the need for change to serve a moral purpose. We change because we see and have faith in ourselves as agents of change to make a difference. Our engagement with change challenges us with the unknown and the uncertain. However, it also rewards us with a better understanding of our own potential, opens our eyes to what is possible and enlightens us on how to shape, steer and learn from change.

The decades of education reform around the globe have presented to us important lessons on what contributes to successful and sustainable change and what results in superficial and short-lived change. One seminal lesson is that change in education is rarely the outcome of a solo effort or the creation of some genius. Instead, it is an ongoing, dynamic and complex process that involves collaboration and interaction among and within groups of individuals, some of whom are leaders, some active contributors, some passive participants and some skeptics. Its impact hinges on the leadership and support provided at different levels, the coherence of the strategies and measures used throughout the process of change, and the readiness of those involved to collaborate, to fail, to learn, to unlearn, and to relearn.

The articles in this issue of the NET Scheme News are about the inspiring experiences and practices of those who approach change with a growth mindset. While the pandemic is taking its toll on every aspect of life, education being no exception, these dedicated professionals see the need for change in their practice and pursue the possibilities promised by advancements in technology and discerned by their educational connoisseurship. As they embark on the journey of change, they look back and learn from their and others' experiences. At the same time, they constantly look ahead, anticipate challenges, identify the hurdles, and explore ideas and opportunities that could lead to smarter solutions. The various intriguing anecdotes they share depict vividly how they engage with, learn from, steer and inspire change.



At the primary level, we have stories about the creation of animated avatars to engage and motivate students, the design of a concept-based English programme where students build their portfolios in the process of enquiry, the development of a reading programme that promotes social and emotional learning, and the use of individual whiteboards to engage students while ensuring social distancing. At the secondary level, the stories featured deal with the creation of authentic English learning environments with optimal use of school facilities, and the promotion of blended learning, design thinking and Makerspace in English lessons. We also have articles on experiential learning programmes for young people and the design of a 'Roadshow' as a strategy to support schools for intellectually disabled students in Hong Kong.

COVID-19 has brought us the new normal. Looking back and looking ahead, we should start preparing ourselves for the new normal 2.0.

Our past gives us lessons; our future gives us hope; and the present is what we focus on as we inspire each other with the lessons we have learnt and the dreams we dream. On this journey of change, there is much we can share, learn and celebrate together. We will never walk alone.

It is time for me to leave the driver's seat in the NET Section. It has been a memorable eight-plus years. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for joining, supporting and collaborating with us on this journey of change. Take care, stay well and keep the faith.

**Joe Leung, Chief Curriculum Development Officer,  
NET Section**

## A Virtual English Room: Fostering a Love of Literacy in the Digital Age

As a NET, the English Room is my kingdom. Away from some of the rules, expectations and orthodoxies of the wider school, it is a place for students to express themselves freely and discover a passion for a language that could otherwise be somewhat intimidating. In contrast to the traditional classroom set-up of individual, front-facing desks, the English Room offers an approximation of the collaborative learning environment in which I learned English as a child in the UK, complete with a seating area for storytelling, colourful tables, displays and musical instruments. Over the past three years, I have endeavoured to create a low-stakes, low-pressure environment in which English literacy can be explored in a way that fosters curiosity and passion for our subject. I have witnessed many examples of otherwise shy students opening up and taking pleasure in expressing themselves in English, thanks to the unique routines and varied activities afforded by such a space within the school.

Consequently, when COVID-19 struck and our school lives were turned upside-down, I feared most for the very thing that the English Room had provided for my students: a safe space in which to truly enjoy English and its many applications. As we all scrambled to adjust to the new normal of *Zoom*, *Google Classroom* and the various other permutations of distance learning, I was puzzled as to how I could replicate the wonderful rapport and atmosphere I enjoy daily with my students. While every effort was being made to ensure that the students kept up with subject content, I knew that it was just as important to maintain the students' motivation and interest in English during their time away from school.



*"The challenge before me was to replicate the colourful, stimulating environment of the English Room (above) in the students' homes."*

My first attempts at making 'flipped classroom' video content for the students simply consisted of recording my screen as I talked them through a *PowerPoint* (albeit as animatedly as I could). However, I soon realised that simply watching a *PowerPoint* presentation alongside my voice was not enough to inspire my students in the same way that the carefully crafted English Room environment had been doing so successfully. Where was the spark of engagement I had felt when teaching the students face-to-face? I had to find a way to maintain a connection with them that went beyond simply hearing my voice. It was for this reason that I created my *YouTube* channel, 'Mr Uden's English Room'.

I already knew that the students were incredibly tech-savvy, and that they could spend hours engaging with online content if they found it sufficiently interesting or rewarding. My students' many allusions and references to online games and funny *YouTube*ers assured me that if I could create the right content, they would engage faithfully with what I had produced and that *YouTube* could be a valuable component in their learning. The key strength of online videos as a learning platform is the fact that students can pause, rewind or even slow down videos so as to engage with the content at their own pace and in a low-stakes and non-threatening environment. Now, all I had to do was create videos the students actually wanted to watch.



*A student enjoying 'Mr Uden's English Room' at home during school suspension*

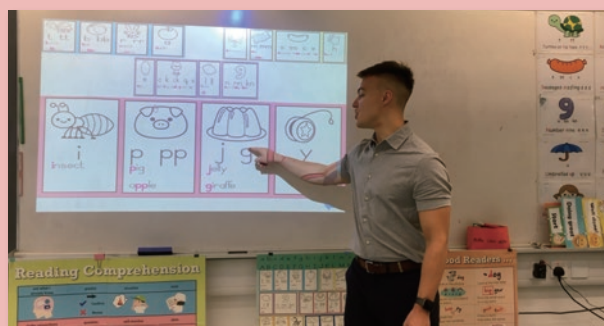
My first videos consisted of myself standing in front of a whiteboard and speaking to the camera as though my students were sitting in front of me. They were clumsily edited on my phone; the lighting and sound were not particularly appealing and my visual aids were limited to

what I could hold up with my hands or write on the board. After a few weeks of using this set-up, I took an online course in video editing, another in cinematography and a third in lighting and sound. My intention was to drastically increase the production value of my videos so that they could compete for my students' attention with the various online games and YouTube attractions they so adored. I began using a better camera, a stage light and a clip-on microphone, and used professional editing software so that my resources would appear on the screen as I spoke. I added titles, transitions and background music to give the videos a professional feel, as I believed students would only pause, rewind and repeat videos they took pleasure in viewing the first time around.

The response to these videos was tremendous and far beyond anything I had expected. When we returned to school after the first school suspension, students were approaching me in the corridors and quoting lines from the videos back to me. Parents contacted the school to say how much their children had enjoyed watching the channel and I reflected that the students' receptive and expressive skills had made great progress, despite their general lack of exposure to English at home. So when school was re-suspended in July, I picked up exactly where I had left off.

I realised that my videos lacked an element of interaction. They had the tendency to be rather didactic in nature, as they simply consisted of myself speaking into a camera. I had admired from afar the efforts of my fellow NET and content-creator, Donald Elkins, whose channel, 'Home Learning Heroes' regularly featured his charming sons as participants. It was this reflection that birthed my animated companions, Jimmy and Kimmy. Jimmy and Kimmy are 'Memoji' creations – cartoon students that appear in my channel's videos. Using my iPad, I recorded these animated avatars answering questions, interacting with one another and correcting each other's mistakes. They were a fantastic tool for modelling the types of interaction the students would usually be having with their classmates in the English Room. The characters were a great way to maintain pace in the videos and to incorporate comedy. Once again, the response to these characters was extremely positive and now that we are back in school, my P1 students are often quite shocked to see me walking around the school unaccompanied by my animated sidekicks. As we commenced this academic year, many of our local teachers have volunteered to appear on the channel, and the students take great pleasure in seeing their class teachers appear alongside Jimmy and Kimmy.

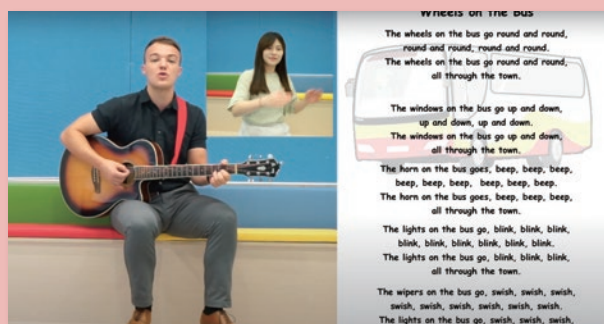
While this year has been a tough time for many around the world and a challenge for our students, I am thankful for the opportunity it has given me to once again approach teaching with a beginner's mind and a growth mindset. Video editing, cinematography, and sound mixing were



*"In the early videos, I simply taught as usual in front of my iPhone camera."*



*"As time progressed, lights, microphones and visual effects made the videos more engaging."*



*The school's local English teachers providing welcome contribution to some of the recent videos*



*The ever-popular characters of Jimmy and Kimmy adding a fresh and interactive dimension*

not among the lifelong learning opportunities I believed 2021 had in store for me, but I am grateful for this new window into digital content-creation and amazed by the passion and confidence it has inspired in my students. I will continue exploring this facet of teaching long after the troubles of the pandemic are a distant memory and I look forward to taking the valuable lessons I have learned during this period with me into my post-COVID teaching.

**Harry Uden, NET, S.K.H. Holy Cross Primary School**

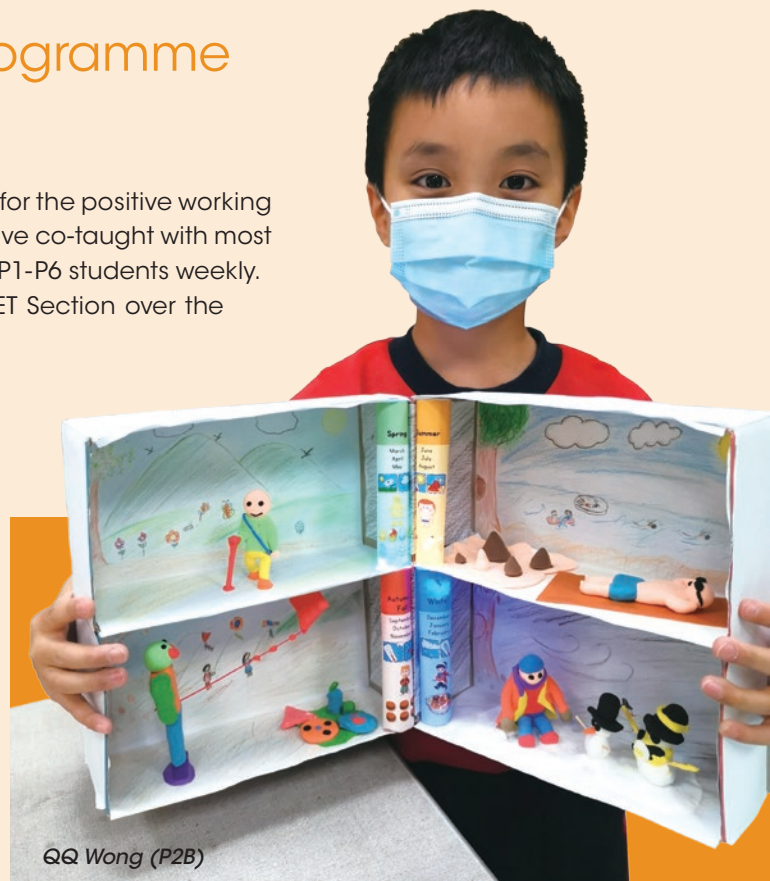
## A Concept-based English Programme in a Local School

Now entering my 11th year at Tung Tak School, I am grateful for the positive working relationships fostered between my colleagues and me. I have co-taught with most local English teachers for a minimum of eight years. I teach P1-P6 students weekly. Our school has used PLP-R/W and KIP prepared by the NET Section over the years but is currently in a transition process.

Tung Tak School is a unique village school. Built in 1957, and looking like a traditional Chinese dwelling with four corridors of classrooms around a central garden filled with mango trees and flowers, the school has about 200 students. There is one class for each level.

The school has always taken the challenge of catering for learner diversity seriously. It is taking part in several initiatives including the 'Happy School' movement. It is also modelling its current development after the Finnish and Forest School approaches. A good motto for the school is, "Each child has his or her own genius. It's our job to help them discover it."

My own children have been learning for seven years in a school using an inquiry-based model. I have experienced this model from a parental perspective. Two years ago, I took part in a concept and inquiry-based teaching and learning session at the Education Expo. Highly inspired by my experience, I further liaised with educators working in the International Baccalaureate (IB) system. I also disseminated my findings through a professional development workshop for my colleagues.



QQ Wong (P2B)

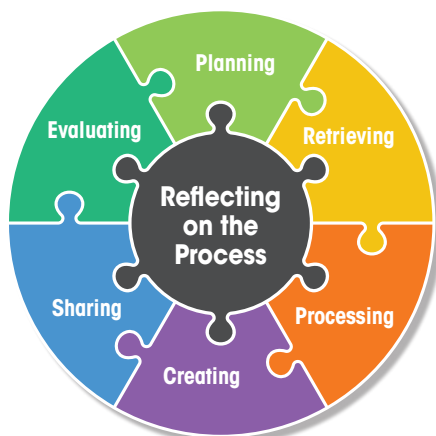
Ms Shirley Ip, one of my co-teachers and also the school's curriculum head, used some of the ideas from the above-mentioned workshop to bridge gaps in her students' understanding. She was then invited to share her positive experience with other professionals at The Chinese University of Hong Kong; hence the interest in inquiry and concept-based models of instruction at our school grew.

Our school is now moving toward theme and concept-based education across the curriculum. This more streamlined approach to curriculum planning is common in international schools worldwide. It promotes cross-curricular cooperation and lessens the cognitive load for students who experience a less disjointed introduction to topics.

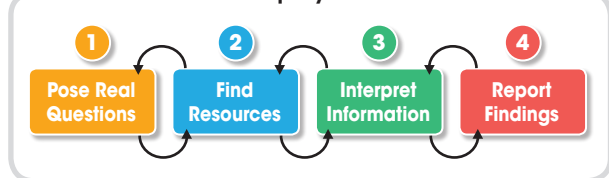
For example, if students are studying the theme of 'Weather and Seasons', which stresses the bigger concept of *Change*, they will be exposed to this concept in every subject including language, maths, and art. This approach can make students' learning more salient.

Our school takes in a wide range of students with different backgrounds, experiences, and attainment levels. To better meet the needs and preferences of these students and their families, our principal approached me with the task of running a pilot programme in P1 and P2. He requested I design an inquiry-based curriculum for each level, using our own current textbook as the guide for selecting themes. Holding a master's degree in TESOL, I am always up for a challenge, and I agreed.

### Inquiry-based learning



### The Inquiry Process



This project, designed from June to August, was launched in September 2020. All students in P1 and P2 were invited to apply for placement in the pilot programme. Applicants were selected through an interview-style assessment involving both students and their families.

The programme uses process-focused portfolio building with an eye to helping students better refine their own learning outcomes and products. Rubrics are used extensively to communicate success criteria. Each level will study 5-6 units. Each unit will be 6-8 weeks in length.

The P1 class has just finished their first unit: 'Myself and My Family'. The bigger concepts they learned included the idea of 'uniqueness' and 'a small but important part of the whole'. For assessment they wrote, revised, edited, and published a report which they presented orally to the class along with a self-constructed family tree.

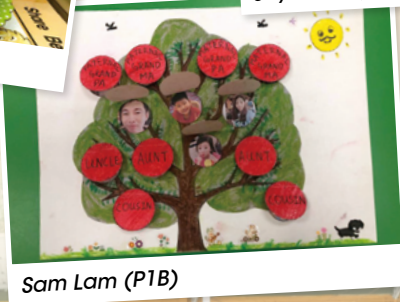
The P2 class has completed their first unit 'Weather and Seasons'. They inquired more deeply into the bigger ideas of 'change' and 'cycles'. They also wrote a report and

presented it orally. They each made a seasons diorama to show others what the weather is like, what activities people do, and what clothes people wear, during each season. Students really enjoyed the process of learning this way!

The importance of a strong school-home connection cannot be overstated and for this reason, these classes make extensive use of the Seesaw app which also serves as a digital portfolio for students' work. Additionally, the parents and students are very active in a *WhatsApp* group where I post daily homework notices. Other apps used extensively include *Epic! Books* for home reading and *YouTube* where I make and upload videos to support student learning. All materials are also posted to *Google Classroom* daily.

A picture paints a thousand words and so does a photograph. Let me share a few with you here, and good luck with all your projects.

**Miranda Breeding, NET, Tung Tak School**



# Two Minutes With Cup Noodles

CCC Kei Faat (Yau Tong) Primary School

EPC: Ms Anna Tang

Student: Joey Chan Hei Tung

Joey played the role of the Cup Noodle Man

Winning Performance in Story to Stage  
Puppetry Competition 2018/2019 Session 4

Joey Chan Hei Tung played the part of the Cup Noodle Man in her school's winning puppetry performance in April 2019. In a recent interview, she talked about her experience whilst waiting for her noodles to be ready!



## QUESTION 1

**What made you decide to join the puppetry team?**

Well, it all started with an invitation from Ms Tang, my English teacher. Puppetry was a new activity at our school. I am a member of the school drama team so my teacher invited me. I thought it would be fun so I joined it.

## QUESTION 2

**What was the biggest challenge and how did you overcome it?**

Puppetry was more difficult than I thought since I could only use my voice to act. I could not use facial expressions or body language. I also had to move and control the puppet in the puppet tent which is a tiny space for five people. We had to co-operate to avoid collision. I was originally the crocodile. Then I was given the leading role a few weeks before the competition since the teacher thought I would be better suited to that part. I had to learn the script for my new character in a short time. I practised and recited my lines every day and thought about how to act well as that character.

## QUESTION 3

**What was your favourite part in the process?**

Doing the actual competition performance with teammates. I really enjoyed that part!

## QUESTION 4

**What advice would you give your peers?**

I would say: be flexible to try different learning experiences and be brave enough to accept any challenge. Also believe in yourself and keep on practising to achieve your goal. Enjoy the process and don't worry about the outcome.

## QUESTION 5

**Do you actually like eating cup noodles?**

I do eat them sometimes, but I prefer salad!

**Rachael Williamson, Advisory Teacher,  
NET Section**

## New Beginnings

I joined Chi Hong Primary School in January 2020, shortly before class suspension began. My role at this school since then has been to use my academic knowledge in curriculum design to plan, create and develop a good curriculum framework to support a school-based reading programme for all grade levels. I believe that a strong reading curriculum needs to be learner-centred, relevant, personalised and contextualised to ensure that learning is achieved progressively.

Before I began my job at Chi Hong, I researched quality reading strategies that focused on different skills for the top-down, bottom-up and interactive reading models. I was able to create a bank of 40+ reading strategies that target different reading skills. I compiled my research studies and hosted a teacher development workshop that focused on reading strategies. After the workshop, I went into the design phase of the curriculum for Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. The Key Stage 1 curriculum emphasises intensive reading to meet the objectives of 'learning to read'. In Key Stage 2, the curriculum highlights the need for extensive reading to promote 'reading to learn'. All books have been selected from the *Get Epic* platform to suit multimodal, blended, distance and sustainable learning. The reading framework consists of the following components:

- Book Title
- Book Description
- Theme and Vocabulary Match Index
- Reading Strategies
- Teaching and Learning Objectives
- Content Words
- High Frequency Words
- Resources



All recommended books for every unit are provided with key details that facilitate the final selection of books during our co-planning meetings. The framework has also served as a bridge between the role of the NET and that of the General English curriculum. Supplementary resources that have also been designed to enhance the programme include speaking, reading comprehension and phonics booklets.

The curriculum at Chi Hong now includes the common edu-buzzwords of today and has become a pathway for holistic lifelong learning. I have also ensured that all units consist of activities that promote social and emotional learning through character education. For example, one of the key ingredients of the curriculum is mindfulness in language education. Mindful reading has been used as a way to activate prior knowledge. This activity serves as a catalyst for an enriched reading experience and provides an opportunity for students to develop their character and reduce learner anxiety. Finally, to keep up with the latest developments in the education reform, all activities are now transitioning from 'assessment for learning' towards 'assessment as learning'.

Looking ahead, with hopes of the COVID-19 pandemic coming to an end, the new curriculum framework will be able to take off at full throttle. Yet, it is during times like this you have the 'Eureka' moment! As far as I am concerned, catering to the diverse needs of the learners has always been a part of the job description. To always teach with a passion till it becomes an automatic practice, however, goes beyond that job description, and beyond COVID-19.

**Saroj R Punjabi, NET, Chi Hong Primary School**





One of the Roadshows organised by the ID Roadshow Team

## Learning to the Beat of a Different Drum

In the 2013 NET Scheme News, Issue 23, Mr Joe Leung wrote his first article entitled, 'A Cup of Joe, a Cup of Dreams'. In this article, he highlighted the strengths of the NET Section. He described the Section as an international professional community within which corporate memory is built while everybody is enjoying an experience of learning and professional growth. Furthermore, he quoted Dr Sugata Mitra, the creator of the 'Hole in the Wall', who said during a 2010 TED Talk, "If children have interest, then education takes place." But what about students that walk to the beat of their own drum?

Joe Leung has played an important and valuable role in supporting the learning and teaching of students with intellectual disability (ID). As a drummer himself, Joe has been guiding the NET Section to support ID students so that they can make their own 'unique music' to the beat of their own drum.

Since the 2016/17 school year, 10 schools for students with ID have joined the NET Scheme. The promising collaboration between the ID schools and the NET Section justified a Roadshow to celebrate their joint achievements and plot the way forward. During the last week of October 2020, the team leaders of the ID Development Team, Mr Lionell Horn and Ms Carol Pang, travelled all over Hong Kong to visit ID schools with Advisory Teachers (ATs) and Regional NET Coordinators (RNCs) also helping ID schools. The aim of the Roadshow was to provide a platform for school curriculum leaders to identify their needs and understand how the support from the NET Section has been delivered to ID schools over the past four years. This includes:

- providing onsite visits during co-planning and co-teaching sessions to promote and trial innovative teaching strategies as well as learning and teaching resources;
- promoting curriculum and pedagogical innovation through curriculum mapping of 'The Adapted Learning Targets and Learning Objectives for the English Language Curriculum for Students with Intellectual Disability (P1-S3)' (2018);
- organising professional development through regular cluster meetings;
- organising competitions; and
- disseminating good practices, innovative teaching methods and resource materials through the community of practice established amongst the ID schools.

The cornerstone of the primary programmes in the NET Section is collaboration. The tripartite partnership between the English Panel Chairs (EPCs), Native-speaking English Teachers (NETs) and the Advisory Teachers (ATs) plays an important role in ensuring professional dialogue and growth for all parties. Professional growth is also supported through onsite and online professional development opportunities to introduce pedagogical innovation. Through collaborative planning sessions, teachers select and implement innovative learning, teaching and assessment methods and materials. All these happen with a focus on the strengths and interests of students with ID to cater for their specific needs when they are learning English as a second language. Teachers also identify their roles in the collaborative teaching sessions. After the co-taught lessons, teachers

share their personal anecdotes and reflect on the learning and teaching.

Over the past four years, the NET Section has conducted seven cluster meetings to provide networking opportunities for ID schools and to create a professional development platform where teachers can share ideas and resources, particularly the curriculum map that supports the implementation of the adapted ID curriculum and the GorillaPD platform for self-directed professional development. All ID schools also have access to the Primary Literacy Programme – Reading and Writing (PLP-R/W) (Key Stage 1) resources to supplement their existing learning and teaching material.

A number of assessment tools have also been adapted, developed and shared. These tools form the basis for the data collection as part of the Response To Intervention (RTI) framework implementation that supports students across three tiers of development. They include:

- the class profile to identify and record students' strengths and support needs;
- the perceptual development test developed by the ID team, to support the assessment of reading readiness;
- the 'Concepts about Print' test (Marie Clay) to determine the necessary knowledge about English print; and
- the matching students to book levels test to establish the reading level of individual students.

The NET Section has also developed a strength and interest survey using the multiple intelligences of Howard Gardner and an adapted survey from Kluth and Schwartz (2008). Students choose their favourite activities in the English classroom, e.g. whole-class, small-group or interest-based activities. The data from this survey supports the teachers in designing their lessons and choosing pedagogical approaches and English resources to be used. The baseline data is entered into the class profile, which supports the teachers during the learning and teaching.

The NETs and the local English teachers not only consider the strengths and interests of students with ID, but they also focus on multisensory learning to ensure that students are engaged and on task during learning.

To identify and tap into the students' strengths and to address the students' weaknesses, e.g. midline crossing, teachers make use of chants, rhymes, songs, games and e-learning tools, e.g. matching words and pictures, to support learning and the assessment of students' progress. High-interest low-level books are used in Key Stage 2 to engage older students in reading.

A summary of feedback received from the ID schools was also shared with the curriculum leaders during the Roadshow. The teachers valued the support received from the NET Section, in particular, the English Day support, the networking during the cluster meetings, the assessment tools provided, and the resources and materials supplied to the schools. The value of the advisory support plans (ASPs) was highlighted and the teachers acknowledged that the ASPs supported and facilitated the school-based curriculum development and the implementation of the adapted ID curriculum. The teachers agreed that the ASPs promoted professional dialogue during co-planning meetings, supported the exchange of ideas and strategies, and facilitated co-curricular activities that promoted English learning through play-based interaction in an authentic environment.



The ID schools are now fully fledged members of the NET Scheme and we all stand to gain from their unique experiences. We no longer have 'single drummers', but rather a band of musicians creating harmonious music. We look forward to an ongoing collaboration between the ID schools and the NET Section.

#### **The ID Roadshow Team, NET Section**

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## A New Normal and a New Way of Teaching

Nurturing the hidden qualities of students and providing the best to meet their educational needs is a virtue that every school follows. Looking back, when I started working at a local secondary school two years ago, change was already in the pipeline, with iPads becoming a common sight in the classrooms. I began to experiment with different apps to make learning interactive and fun. Some apps worked, and some did not work very well. Last year, teaching on Zoom during COVID-19 was a learning curve for both teachers and students. In that process of trial and error, I participated in a few EDB workshops to learn more about technology integration and the new trends in classrooms around the world. It helped me to improve my teaching significantly.

This year, I moved to this gem of a school called Salesians of Don Bosco Ng Siu Mui Secondary School. This school aims to cater for learner diversity. Instead of teaching a fish to climb a tree, it creates a suitable environment for the students and their differing needs. The school has a well-equipped design & technology workshop with fully functional industrial-scale machines. It also runs a café in which students learn the finer points of the hospitality business, a pottery room and an art gallery where they can express their artistic talent, a gym with a boxing ring to learn discipline and release some energy, a bakery room to learn how to feed themselves and an eco-lab to understand their relationship with the environment.

Embracing change is a challenge. During my early years in education, I was simply pleased to be

involved in a consistent teaching manner. Currently, I am making myself familiar with all these new facilities, combining them with my previous knowledge to provide authentic English learning environments for my students. As Jack Canfield once said, "Change is inevitable in life. You can either resist it and potentially get run over by it, or you can choose to cooperate with it, adapt to it, and learn how to benefit from it."

Looking forward to the future, I am taking part in various staff development workshops to maintain a growth mindset. I have discovered that every student is uniquely different and has his/her own learning pace. Therefore, the same approach might not work for some students. As a NET, I have an excellent opportunity to implement an active learning approach. I can utilise the facilities in the school to provide authentic language usage for my students in the classroom. For these, I am truly thankful.



**Yasir Bin Shabbir, Archer, NET, Salesians of Don Bosco Ng Siu Mui Secondary School**

# Makerspace Workshop

The word 'makerspace' brings to mind state-of-the-art 3D printers, design labs, cutting edge apps – perhaps beyond the scope of a traditional English language classroom. Or is it? At Yuen Long Public Secondary School (YLPSS), we have been looking to incorporate the ideas of Makerspace in our classrooms. As the school term was ready to begin, we were eager to join with other educators in an online workshop presented by the NET Section together with the Operation Solnno Team at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. This innovative workshop gave us the opportunity to learn from leading experts in Makerspace and Design Thinking. It also allowed us to envision the ways Makerspace would open up our students to 21st century learning.

The Makerspace workshop kicked off with an interactive online introduction to the ideas of Design Thinking. With this overview, teachers gained confidence in discussing the core steps of the design process – those being *empathise, define, ideate, prototype, and test*. We collaborated with other teachers to assemble Makerspace activities with the Design Kit provided by the presenters. Through sharing approaches and perspectives, we gained practical insights into how to adapt Makerspace in an English-learning environment.

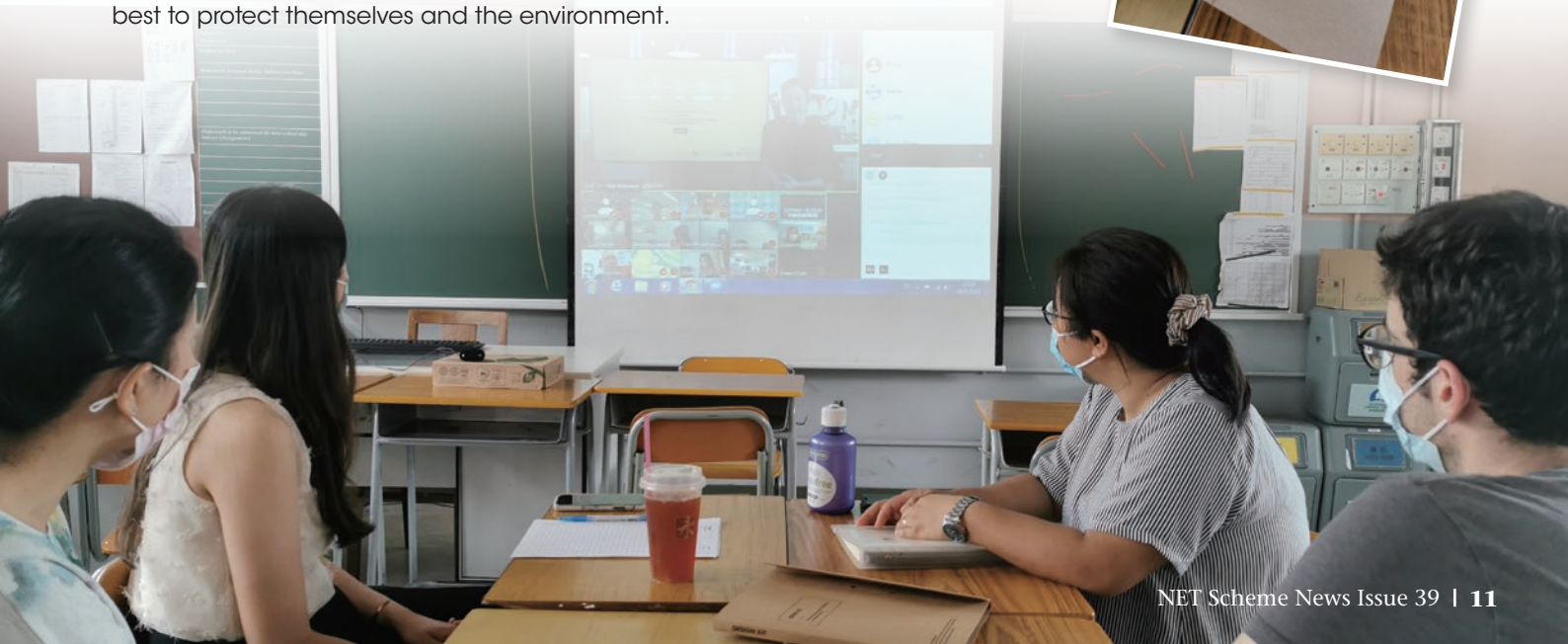
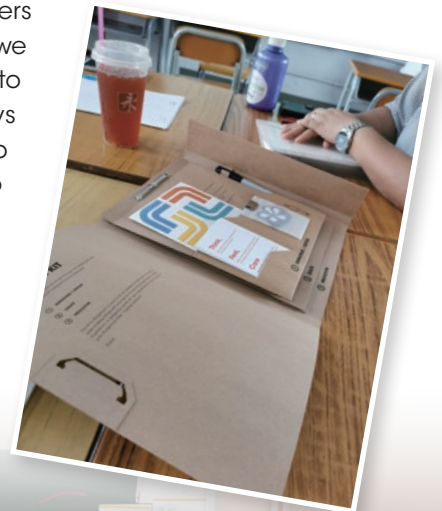
Our interest in Makerspace at YLPSS first began when our school joined the "Seed" project on 'Makerspace' offered by the NET Section. We have for some time sought to bring Makerspace and Design Thinking into the classrooms for our students. This workshop allowed us to turn the big ideas of Makerspace into accessible activities and practical tips that we can start using in our lessons. At our school, it is our plan to let S2 students use Makerspace and Design Thinking to address some key problems arising in this time of COVID-19 and social distancing as they design their own educational board games for fellow schoolmates while showing them how best to protect themselves and the environment.

One of our teachers, Ms Lee Pui Ling, reflected on the workshop:

*"I was especially impressed by how participants empathised with students in the process of learning, and visualised their thinking using the metaphors of a museum and a basketball match; and developed various teaching and learning strategies that cater for learner diversity and different learning styles. I am looking forward to taking a more empathetic approach to not only engage with students but to nurture in them a caring attitude and inspire their imagination to ideate solutions, prototype and test their product or idea in action. This, I believe, will prepare students to tackle real-world problems, for which the answer key has not yet been written."*

The workshop provided new inspiration for us to embark on Makerspace and Design Thinking with our own students at YLPSS. Guided by experienced designers from Operation Solnno, we gained new insights into these 21st century ways of learning. This workshop left us empowered to make Makerspace a reality for our students.

**Daniel Henry, NET,  
Yuen Long Public  
Secondary School**



# Make a Space for Everyone, Teachers and Students Including

## Background

Last year my school joined the Makerspace “Seed” project offered by the NET Section. When I first heard the term, my reaction was, ‘not another STEM project, please!’. To my surprise, Makerspace is very flexible and even applicable to daily life. It is more like a generic tool which can be used in many ways in English teaching. It can be a way to create space for students and teachers to learn and teach English better.

## What is Makerspace?

A Makerspace is a space where you can work with others using the Design Thinking phases (*empathise, define, ideate, prototype and test*) together with four thinking routines (‘Parts, Purposes, Complexities’; ‘Parts, People, Interactions’; ‘Think, Feel Care’; and ‘Imagine If’) to think positively and solve problems in more efficient ways.

## What is Makerspace in the English classroom?

You may think that Design Thinking does not relate to language teaching, but let us not forget that language is a tool and a medium for users to explore the world, so it is always possible for us to incorporate Design Thinking and Makerspace in English teaching.

In the English classroom, we teach students the thinking routines one by one and give them opportunities to apply them to different tasks. For example, when they need to write about the school campus, we teach them to use ‘Parts, Purposes and Complexities’ to look closely at the rooms and facilities and thus, gain more ideas for their writing. Throughout the process, students are introduced to and practise vocabulary, target grammar items, and sentence structures. Additionally, we ask students to apply this thinking routine to other situations and topics of interest, like their homes, stationery, or clothing items. Students keep track and record their discoveries in a Makerspace handbook we have created. Makerspace



also encourages collaboration as students can share their findings in class.

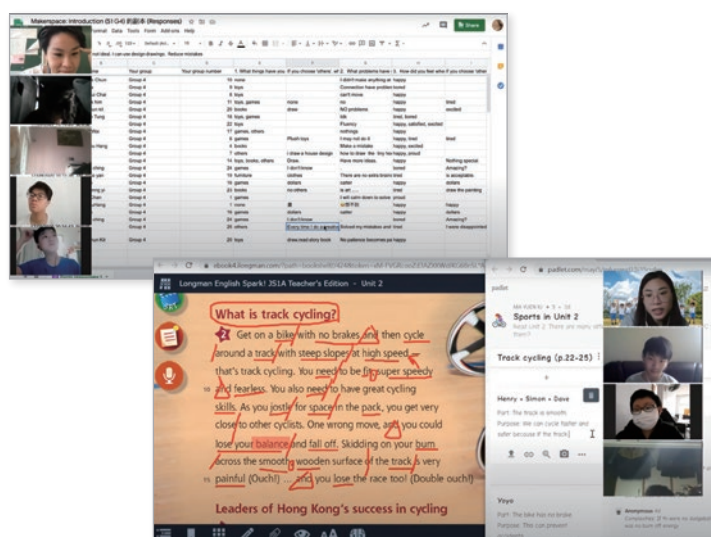
The extra time involved in introducing Makerspace and Design Thinking is an investment in learning and teaching. The payout will come later when the students have mastered the thinking routines and are able to use them independently. When students can own their learning, become more confident and find learning English more meaningful because they have the space to choose what to do, this is the ultimate reward.

Most importantly, Makerspace and Design Thinking can bridge the gap between language learning and reality as they focus on finding solutions to real problems. When students choose their own focus and independently analyse an object using ‘Parts, Purposes, Complexities’ or analyse a system using ‘Parts, People, Interactions’ or find their own solutions to problems using Design Thinking principles, a sense of ownership of their work is promoted. The integration of Makerspace into the English teaching programme and the space created can provoke ideation, creativity and problem-solving skills, thus increasing students’ intrinsic motivation to learn English.

## What has been done so far?

We started the Makerspace “Seed” project early in the 2019/20 school year with all S1 teachers, including the NET, receiving training from the NET Section. We were enthusiastic about the whole project and looked forward to the final product – board games, which would be played by students in several schools. For months, however, due to COVID-19, we could not meet students face-to-face. Yet, this did not put a stop to the project. We developed 10-minute mini-tasks to be done in online lessons using *Padlet*, *Google Forms* and *Zoom*.

This year, the new team of S1 teachers attended the training workshops held by the Operation Solnno Team of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. By scrutinising the S1 teaching programme and teaching materials, we have found opportunities to include Makerspace.



We have decided that designing and creating board games will still be our final goal and product this year. A Makerspace handbook can serve as teaching material, a logbook, and a reference guide for students. This and a set of 'thinking routines' symbols have been developed for the S1 curriculum. In addition, several sets of writing and reading notes have been created.

Makerspace fascinates and inspires me. It is flexible and I have designed a series of 5-minute tasks for students to practise the thinking routines that fit into nearly every topic. It also helps me visualise the thinking process, cultivate a thinking habit and elicit ideas. Isn't that what I have been looking for? Is it what you are looking for too?

## Voice from Yutians

### Miss So Cheuk Wing, English teacher

*“ I think the Makerspace project is very good training for the students' creativity. Most of the students nowadays show a lack of understanding of people and things around them. The thinking routines involved in this project are useful as they are applicable to most aspects of students' lives.*

*When I teach reading, I can use the 'Parts Purposes and Complexities' thinking routine to analyse the reading passage with my students who are able to give more examples related to the article when using this routine.*

*The challenge is to integrate Makerspace into the Hong Kong educational system so that it also helps the students further develop their language knowledge. ”*



### S4 Chu Ting Hei, Karson and Ho Po Pui, Jasmine

*“ The Makerspace project is very interesting and useful. Some of the concepts are actually similar to those in Liberal Studies. If we had learnt the thinking routines and Design Thinking since S1, we would have done even better now as we would have had more time to practise them in junior forms. ”*

### S1 Lau Po Wa, Thomas

*“ The thinking routines are applicable not only to English learning but also other subjects like IH and Science. Teachers used to ask us to 'think more' but I had no idea how to do it before. Now, the routines provide me with a systematic framework during the thinking process. Also, I find them useful in learning vocabulary by putting related words together and developing ideas in writing. ”*



**Anita Ma Yuen lu, Assistant English Panel Chair,  
Lok Sin Tong Yu Kan Hing Secondary School**

# An Inspirational Educator

Throughout his time as the head of the NET Section, Mr Joe Leung has initiated numerous projects and programmes for promoting English Language learning and teaching through fun and creative means. He has initiated programmes that support students of diverse backgrounds, including those with special educational needs.

In addition, he has created opportunities for his colleagues to network with academic institutions, NGOs, and other community organisations so that they can offer more effective support to schools and the wider community.

In the first term of the school year, Mr Joe Leung and several NET Section officers were invited for a discussion with Mr Arnett Edwards, the principal of Li Po Chun United World College (LPCUWC), and Mr Adrian Kwong, the Youth Outreach Project Manager.

Mr Edwards explained that he would like the LPCUWC community to forge relationships with local secondary schools in Hong Kong through their Youth Education Programmes. The programmes are designed to bring a taste of the interactive and collaborative LPCUWC experience to Hong Kong youths aged 13-17, helping them to develop a sense of global citizenship on the journey towards peace and a sustainable future.

The programmes are created and organised by the LPCUWC students themselves, allowing them to explore global socio-cultural issues from different viewpoints and in different contexts through games, simulations, discussions and collaborative projects. In running these programmes for local Hong Kong

students, they are developing project management skills in the planning, pitching, negotiation and execution of initiatives.

This exciting new collaboration has come about through Mr Joe Leung's long standing experience in the Education Bureau (EDB) as a school inspector. He first met Mr Edwards when he was conducting a school review at LPCUWC in 2011, and since then the two have developed a close connection, which in turn greatly facilitates the development of the Youth Education Programmes.

Mr Joe Leung believes the journey of education is lifelong. We will continue his vision and work together to guide our learning community in developing knowledge, cultivating a growth mindset, creating a sense of global citizenship, and following different pathways to achieve a peaceful and sustainable future. Mr Joe Leung's legacy paves the way for the further development of education for Hong Kong's youth, not only in English language education but also instilling in our youth the important values of respect, compassion, integrity and care for others.

**Catherine Lam and Christine Xavier,  
Regional NET Coordinators, NET Section**



*Scan the QR  
code for more  
information about  
the Youth Education  
Programmes*



*From left: Adrian Kwong, Arnett Edwards, William Cheng, Joe Leung, Adys Wong, Catherine Lam, Christine Xavier*

## Space Town Go! Preparing for Launch



Those familiar with maintaining students' attention during guided reading sessions know how challenging this can be. The struggle is real!

So imagine asking a group of kids to read not 10, not 20 but a whopping 72 small books in a couple of sittings. Now multiply that by 3 year levels, throw in some high frequency word lists, content words, 44 sounds books, all 44 phonemes and a list of decodable words. Now record it all, with a clear voice, a bit louder, but not too loud, and don't tap your fingers, or sniff, or breathe too loud. Now re-read page 4, again, again, ok one more time. Great!

That was the job that faced our young volunteer audio talents who, over many sessions in various recording studios across Hong Kong, were tasked with creating the audio necessary to complete the new *Space Town Go!* web-based resource that is already released for P1 and coming soon for P2 and P3.

A huge thanks to Asha Hemsted, Ruby March, Caleb Smith and Nate Wall. They completed their admittedly sometimes monotonous

task with not a grumble or a moan between them. Their only reward: a few hi-fives and the odd snack or packet of Match Attax to coax out their best performances. (Rumours do persist that parents may have been involved in unlicensed payments and screen-time bribes behind the scenes!)

### In the children's own words...

*"There was reading for days!"*

– Ruby March

*"I imagined I was a football commentator!"*

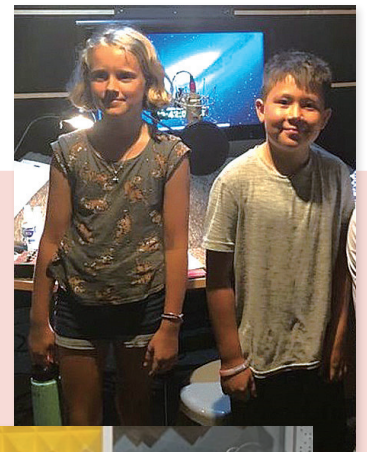
– Caleb Smith

*"It was a great experience to go to a real recording studio!"*

– Nate Wall

*"Being inside the recording studio was cool! I had fun."*

– Asha Hemsted



Thanks guys! From our analytics we can see that thousands of kids are already enjoying the fruits of your labour!

**Roland Smith, Advisory Teacher, NET Section**

# While My Guitar Gently Weeps: What You Don't Already Know About Joe

The lead guitarist is often seen as the heart and soul of a pop/rock musical ensemble. A good lead guitarist is not just a musician who is proficient at doing the job. They give the ensemble its unique, signature sound. They also have a knack for putting a stamp on the music they play. On stage, the best lead guitarist has a stage presence that oozes passion, confidence, personality – and a sprinkling of stardust.

Taking care of a government section more or less the size of a chamber orchestra is no laughing matter. Like playing the lead guitar, it requires not just craft, creativity and originality, but also the talent to know when to whisper softly (but not carelessly) and when to roar like a teen spirit; and when to command the stage and drive the audience into a frenzy and when to take a back seat and let others shine. Let's take a moment to indulge ourselves in a spot of reminiscence on Joe's time as the lead guitarist of the NET Section, in the key of three renowned lead guitar heroes from whom Joe may have learnt a thing or two.

## **Prince, aka the Purple One, The Artist Formerly Known as Prince, Love Symbol, etc**

The artist who had more stage names than our fingers, the late Purple One, was well known for his talents and influence far outsizing his diminutive stature. Prince was revered in the music industry not just for being a versatile, genre-hopping, accomplished guitarist, but also for his work ethic. With almost 50 albums spanning his 35+ years of career, he was without a doubt prolific as an artist. His great gifts in guitar playing and his desire

to improve his craft went hand in hand to earn him the accolade of being "one of the greatest live showmen of all time". A bandmate once spoke admiringly of Prince: "Always doing your best... always giving your all, .... It's the dedication and the passion and the talent, all together... It's really a way of life... Committing and playing with a tremendous amount of conviction. Playing always from the heart and with a great amount of purpose..."



This nicely sums up the Joe that we are familiar with.

Thankfully for us, Joe has only one name, though he might not mind picking up a few more, like a Cuppa, the Black One (referring to his Steve Job-esque all-black outfit). What immediately springs to mind is the countless hours Joe invests in building a collegial working environment, finessing professional discord among staff and transforming the Section into a mini hub of pedagogical innovation. Not to mention the voluminous paper work that Joe handles graciously and diligently to make changes happen. This is Joe's way of life, something in his professional DNA. His conviction and dedication to his role as a change driver is inspiring, to say the least.

Check out these tunes; *1999*, *When Doves Cry*, *Kiss*, *Cream* and his guitar solo in a live performance of *While My Guitar Gently Weeps*

## **Mark Knopfler**

There is nothing dire about Dire Straits. Listen to their hit songs and you can't help marvelling at his command over a range of tones, from the instantly recognisable (at least for people of my age group) distorted guitar riff in *Money for Nothing* to the duologue between the moody acoustic guitar and the stabbing electric guitar in *Private Investigations*.



Mark Knopfler sets himself apart from many other guitar heroes by playing the guitar without a pick. He prizes immediacy and soul more than anything else. Fingerpicking the guitar strings is his way to make a stronger connection with the instrument, and the music that comes out of it. In an article published in a guitar forum, the author compliments Mr Knopfler on his unassuming style: "...while Mark Knopfler may not rip the neck up with shredding madness (like...Van Halen), what he does do is play into the heart of his songs, and he does this extremely well."

One detail that truly defines Joe's time with the NET Section is his open-door office. His office is both inviting and far more transparent than the frosted glass windows in it, thanks to his sincerity and commitment to including and celebrating everybody. Everyone in the section has got a chance to be a guest in his office, to get to know Joe, not only as the Head of the Section who dutifully and passionately performs his role, but also to experience Joe as a humanist who works to connect with all of us and to connect us with one another. He sees strengths in us, encourages and motivates us to develop our best and become better.

In this respect, Joe has certainly added a new shade of meaning to "leaving no stone unturned".

Check out these tunes: *Private Investigations*, *Sultans of Swing*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Money for Nothing*

### Jonny Greenwood

The youngest of the three guitarists on the list, Jonny Greenwood adds a touch of an "indie", left-field feel to the mix. Being the lead guitarist of Radiohead, a band whose sound often borders on the experimental, he is well known for his creative approach to guitar playing. As a music critic writes: "His parts aren't confined to conventional shapes and patterns, so he produces arresting and unexpected sounds." How does attacking the guitar strings with a violin bow sound to you?

In Joe's ever-expanding professional universe, there is plenty of room for ideas and actions, some conventional, some less conventional. He is never less than willing to share his universe, where we don't have to worry about being judged. Without this safe space and his open mind, there would be absolutely no chance

for risky endeavours like puppetry, learning through play, critical literacy, Maker-centred learning, text sets or coding to learn to germinate and take off, nor would there be opportunities for reinventing old wheels, such as storytelling and public speaking. The monthly Office Day has also become a hotspot for internal capacity building, with both colleagues and outside professionals welcomed into our office to share their ideas, discoveries and experience.



Let's not forget the regular episodes of A Cup of Joe, which serve wisdom that matters to both the mind and the heart (and the palate, of course). One of the funkier sections, if not the only one, in the entire EDB, dare I say. We are wiser, more open-minded and more forward-looking, thanks to someone who constantly challenges our perception of what is possible.

Check out these tunes: *Creep*, *Just*, *Lift*

*While My Guitar Gently Weeps* may sound like the title of a "Best of" retrospective collection of a bona fide artist. But Joe can take comfort in the knowledge that great guitarists don't easily put a coda to their music. As Joe heads towards the final few notes of his NET Section opus, what lies ahead can only be another opus waiting to unfold. So expect more from our lead guitarist, who dares to "stay hungry" and "stay foolish". Stay tuned.

**William Cheng, Senior Curriculum Development Officer, NET Section**

## What's in a Name?

### – Joe Leung, KW, in NET Section's Hall of Fame

**J**ust about 8 years ago, he came to the NET Section like a dream.

**O**ngoing enhancement since then he has brought to the Scheme.

**E**arnestly in the last year he held office, he guided the office through COVID-19.

**L**eading us,

**E**mpowering us,

**U**nderstanding us,

**N**ever giving up,

**G**ood Joe has brought us many good shows, and many cups of Joe.

**K**ind and caring, our CCDO.

**W**e wish him countless blessings as his post-retirement story starts to unfold.

**Teresa Chu, Chief Editor, NET Section**



## Educators' Dreams: More Than a Leap of Faith

A dream of mine began to take shape in the summer of 2008 in Cambridge. A few days before my graduation ceremony, I went for a dinner get-together with my college friends. When one graduates, one is usually asked: 'Are you sure you know what you're going to do with your degree?' I remember that moment. Little did I know what a job in curriculum planning and development entailed, but for some reason, I said that was what I would like to do. At the time, it was a casual conversation, but in retrospect, my answer has come to seem foretelling.



When I left my frontline teaching job in 2011, I thought that working in educational research was the best way to satisfy my professional interests. But by 2013, having worked as a School Development Officer in The Quality School Improvement Project run by The Chinese University of Hong Kong, I had developed a serious interest in learning theory and wanted to find out how teacher education could be better supported with an enhanced understanding of epistemology and pedagogy.

Soon I got the chance to work in the NET Section where I met Mr Joe Leung, who gave me numerous challenging yet rewarding tasks, including writing up project proposals, and coordinating a number of School Support Partners (SSP) projects and "Seed" projects, all of which have allowed me to work collaboratively with our frontline teachers. Joe has given so generously of his time to coach me, and I have benefitted a lot from his expertise, experience and wisdom. Some of the most memorable moments in this job have been inspiring discussions about pedagogical and epistemological issues with Joe when I was involved in drafting parts of a chapter on 'Effective Learning and Teaching' for *The Secondary Education Curriculum Guide (SECG)* (2017).

I would like to thank Joe for his coaching, support and guidance over these years; more importantly, for sharing his vision and dream for the future of education, as reflected in the NET Section's initiatives, from ReAD-driven<sup>1</sup> literacy programmes/projects to the promotion

of coding literacy, learning through play, Makerspace, intercultural competence and public speaking, to name but a few. His faith in driving all these initiatives has inspired a lot of like-minded professionals to take part in his dream. While a person's own dream does not necessarily come to fruition, shared dreams built on faith have proven to be powerful in making a difference. I feel grateful to have had the opportunity to work with Joe and other educators where my dreams and theirs coincidentally crossed paths.

A decade after my graduation, I made a trip back to Cambridge to catch up with my teachers and friends. It was a summer day in 2018 when I recalled 'the dream' I had had back in 2008 and how my dream, built on faith and action, has led to personal and professional growth. I understand now that actualising educators' dreams requires more than just a leap of faith; it also takes perseverance, actions and open-mindedness.

Joe is arguably one of the most active, supportive and open-minded section heads I have ever met. Although it is sad for me that he is retiring this year, his retirement, awash in splendour and accomplishments, also prompts me to reflect on how much an educator can achieve, both personally and professionally.

**Adys Wong, Curriculum Development Officer, NET Section**

<sup>1</sup> ReAD stands for (1) reading across the curriculum; (2) e-learning; (3) assessment literacy; and (4) differentiation.

## Back to Basics

COVID-19, with the resulting long periods of class suspension, has encouraged many teachers in Hong Kong to integrate e-learning into nearly every aspect of their teaching, and, in the process, upskill themselves. However, as students return to school, social distancing measures have prevented them from using shared electronic devices and from building on what they have gained while learning from home. This has taken many teachers back to square one, with simply finding ways to get students engaged with their learning one of the top priorities.

However, at the ELCHK Faith Lutheran School, the NET, Aastha Gajwani, has found a simple yet effective way to engage students in English lessons. She has been using individual whiteboards in her English Room lessons prior to physical distancing. Using individual whiteboards in classes was found useful in getting more students to respond to and engage with learning while staying physically distanced. COVID-19 was one of those occasions when good practices such as this were shared and adopted by everyone in the school.

Apart from increased student engagement, there was one unexpected benefit of the use of individual whiteboards. Teachers were able to use them to support computer-mediated activities in the classroom. This helped maintain the momentum in e-learning that was started with online teaching. Teachers simply used the same activities that they had used when they were teaching online but had the students write their answers on individual whiteboards rather than use keyboards. The result was that students were still seeing teachers model the use of technology as they participated in computer-mediated learning often more multimodal in nature.

The whiteboards were added to the book list of the 2020/21 school year and parents of P1 and P2 students were asked to purchase them at a minimum cost. With the aid of school staff, name tags were fixed to the back of each board. The boards were then distributed to each of the classrooms and stored near the teacher's desk.

### How whiteboards were used in a model lesson

The observed lesson was a 20-minute P1 phonics lesson. The NET was accompanied by a local English teacher and the class

consisted of approximately 20 students sitting in columns and rows. The main teaching focus was identifying the initial phoneme in each word. The NET began the lesson by priming the students for about two minutes on the target phonemes, assisted by pictures and words. This included aural input of the target sounds, visual input of pointing to the letters that made up the sound, and images of things that used the target sounds in their pronunciation. Students were encouraged to listen, after which they reproduced the sounds and words with the teachers.

Next, the teachers demonstrated to the class how to do the activity. One teacher set up the app on the teacher's computer while the other teacher was at the board showing to the students how to write the sounds or matching the sounds to the pictures. Once the app was loaded and ready, the teachers worked together to model how the activity should be done by the students. They explicitly went through all the steps showing students what to do and recycling functional language while they did it.

Here is a general example of the steps to take:

- Teacher shows which side of the board to use.
- Teacher tells students to get the pen ready and look at the screen, and says "We are doing question number... (points and reads the number)".
- Teacher says, "Listen to question number one (teacher says a word twice). Which sound does 'nut' begin with?".





After the demonstration, students were given their individual whiteboards. Teachers called out names and distributed the whiteboards to the students. After checking that everyone was ready, the teacher asked the students to read the question number and the students did the listening activity. While the activity was being conducted, teachers were keeping track of which students were changing their answers, looking at others' answers or having difficulty identifying target sounds. The teacher could also look for fine and gross motor-coordination skills of students by how students were writing the letters and holding the boards.

## Benefits observed in the classroom:

- There was improved whole-class student engagement in shared modes of teaching.
- Students practised listening, reading, and writing skills.
- Teachers modelled the effective use of e-learning platforms.
- Teachers received instant feedback on students' understanding.
- Teachers reinforced purposeful functional classroom language through the instructions in the use of the whiteboards.
- The establishment of classroom routines (especially good for young learners with little in-school experience) was supported.
- Instant student feedback could be given (based on the platform used).

## Conclusion:

All the students were engaged in the lesson and took part in the class activities. Nearly all of the students were able to demonstrate an understanding of the initial phoneme and the corresponding letters by identifying the initial sounds of words and writing their corresponding letters. Students were eager to demonstrate their learning and were actively engaged in applying their phonetic knowledge.

For the teachers, the use of whiteboards and computer platforms provided excellent tools for interactive co-teaching. Teachers took up complementary roles, which allowed lesson to flow smoothly and maximised language input and output during the lesson.

**Sterling Wu, Advisory Teacher, NET Section, and  
Aastha Gajwani, NET, The ELCHK Faith Lutheran School**



# Acclimatising to the Changing Faces of Ed Tech: Flipped Classrooms to Online Learning to Blended Learning

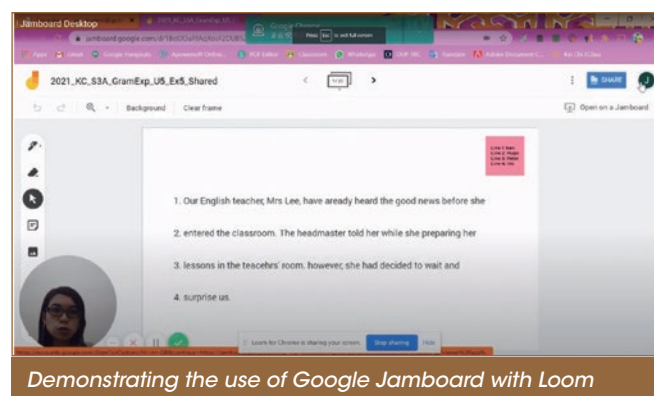
In the 21st century, the learning and teaching community is placing great emphasis on the use of e-resources to facilitate and enhance learning and teaching, in and beyond the English classroom, whether it is to engage students in face-to-face lessons or to guide them to become collaborative contributors on idea-sharing platforms before or after class. Despite the challenges presented by COVID-19, one thing the pandemic has done is put a rocket under our use of technology in education. In the face of online learning and shortened school days, teachers have been looking for useful online tools that can help create purposeful and communicative learning tasks. An ancient Chinese proverb says, "Tell me and I forget. Show me and I may remember. Involve me and I learn." That echoes even louder in the current era of technology-integrated learning and teaching.

## A matter of practice and habit

Myriads of new apps and updates are released every month. Our experience with these rapid developments suggests that there are at least two prerequisites for the successful use of technology. Firstly, we have realised that creating a list of class-based online learning tools that can help our students is essential. Secondly, we as educators need to equip ourselves and update our knowledge of the features of those apps.

Having familiarised ourselves with the features of the selected tools, we need to work out and adopt strategies for scaffolding learning so that our students can benefit from the use of the tools.

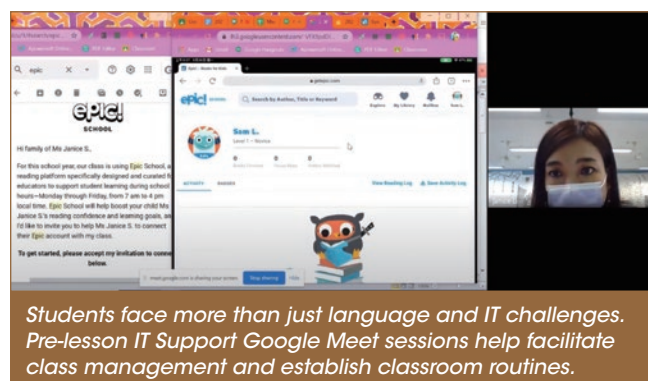
From experience, we have found that our students become more confident and proficient in using the targeted apps if we provide them with a step-by-step guide. First, screen-recorded videos need to be made to introduce the tools, to highlight the functions and purposes of the app and to model their use.



To make our online instruction resemble face-to-face teaching, it is useful to have the students' own teacher do the narration in the video and if possible, to make the video with a webcam so that students can actually see their teacher talking to them. Apps like *Loom* definitely serve the purpose in this regard.

Videos like these can then be made available for access on *YouTube* channels and learning management system platforms, e.g. *Google Classroom*, before students are asked to experiment with the tools. To address learners' diversity, the optimal approach is to offer a pre-lesson trial session for students with real-time Q&A opportunities on platforms like *Google Meet* and *Google Hangouts*.

A noteworthy tip is to target a certain number of apps for your lessons so that your students can see them integrated into their English learning regardless of whether they are attending online or face-to-face classes, or whether they are doing self-directed learning. With regular practice, students will remember how to navigate through the chosen apps and can stay tuned to the technical updates too.

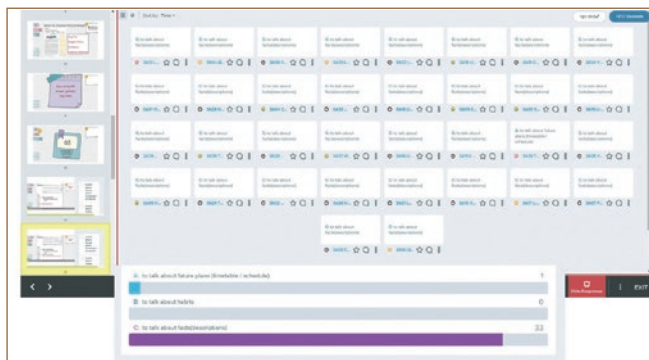


## Quality face-to-face time – a matter of strategic planning

With shortened lesson time, teachers can maximise the quality of face-to-face lessons with the use of interactive presentation platforms and other game-based formative assessment apps that offer instant feedback on students' understanding.

Interactive presentation platforms like *Pear Deck* allow strategically-designed lessons to be taught in a more organised manner, with question types arranged to elicit responses from students of different abilities and learning preferences. Students are also highly engaged throughout the lesson as each and every one of them has a task to do at different stages of the lesson.

Instant responses and polls can provide insight for teachers about whether further teaching adaptations are needed in lessons and if follow-up work is needed for individual students. With these platforms, teachers can prepare post-lesson feedback and audio recordings with the relevant slides prepared so that students are able to engage in the same lessons again after class and at their own pace to capitalise on teachers' input.



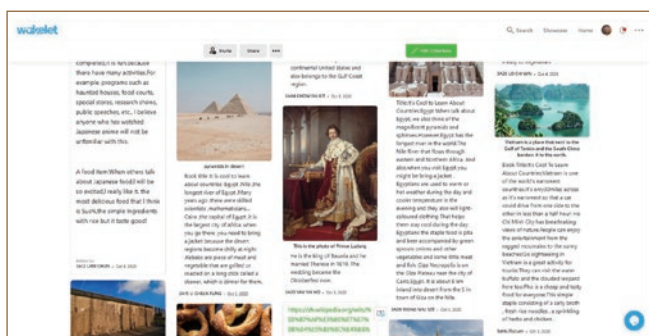
*Instant interactive tasks not only engage learners actively but provide teachers with feedback on how to adjust their teaching.*

Undoubtedly, we can no longer afford the time to do revision or debrief our students on assignments as much as we would like to. Such pedagogical strategies can be staged online via platforms like *Quizlet* and *Quizziz*, which we can turn into 'revision companions' so that students can study in a more relaxed self-paced mode.



*Game platforms, embedded with immersive and audio readers, like Quizziz and Quizlet, are revision companions.*

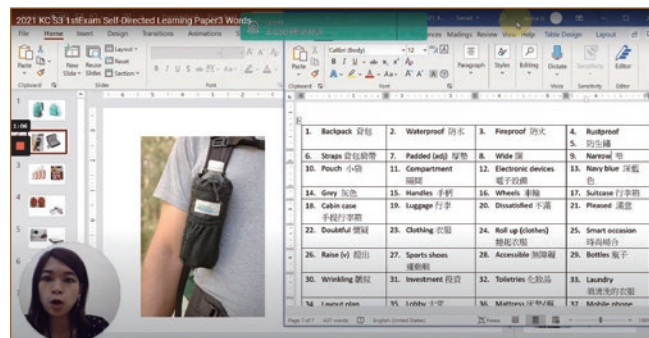
The use of idea-sharing platforms, like *Wakelet*, enables students to share their responses to a pre-lesson task, which could later serve both as a springboard for class discussions and after-class support. Another advantage of platforms like *Wakelet* is that they are multimodal.



*Students can share their multimodal research findings with their classmates on platforms like Wakelet.*

Similarly, answer-checking for revision and skills strengthening exercises can be pre-recorded on video using apps like *Loom* that facilitate document and screen annotation.

Thus with the right apps, teachers are able to keep track of their students' individual learning records and progress, and students can be better equipped for assessment and further learning in face-to-face lessons.



*Screen recordings with teacher narration enabled by Loom create a classroom-like atmosphere for students to learn after-class revision materials at home.*

To ensure that students have done their share of learning at home, *Google Assignments* can be set up requesting students to scan their checked work with apps like *Adobe Scan* so that teachers can supervise their learning and progress. To raise students' motivation in accessing these self-directed learning resources, a class-based reward system can be established as positive reinforcement.



*Dr Francis Lee Kam Cheung is sharing his insights into blended learning with our S3 students and students at our sister school in Zhongshan, China.*

Considering the circumstances we face, it seems that the blended learning mode is here to stay. We may not know or be fully ready for the challenges ahead of us, but with a will to uphold new learning and teaching habits, we can embrace the recent changes with grace, calm and confidence. Using tech-supported learning and teaching means that we have resonated with our school theme this year. We have found that we can **Be Grateful** for the very test that the world has presented to us, and **Be Hopeful** for the good that is to come!

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