NET
SCHEME NEWS

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Fostering Collaboration
Driving Innovation

Having taken up the post of CCDO (NET) since February this year, I have definitely been enjoying a very special privilege, which is the opportunity to work at the vibrant NET Section office with over 60 committed colleagues coming from different parts of the world. With this international team of professional English language educators, the Section tirelessly and creatively supports the implementation of the English Language curriculum and the NET Scheme in Hong Kong while encouraging English language teachers to network and form their own learning community.

Over the past years working in different posts in the Education Bureau, I have met many inspirational English teachers who impressed me with not only their professional knowledge in language education but also their passion and creativity. There were also some beautiful moments when I saw the little faces and eyes of the students simply light up after their English teachers had introduced to them some purposeful and interesting tasks. In a recent school visit, I was particularly moved by a reflection written by a secondary student. The student was determined to learn English well as he wished to work in an ice hotel overseas after watching the authentic video clips introduced by his English teacher. The video clips might not be anything groundbreaking, but they could be an eye-opening or even life-changing experience for our students. To every educator, all these little everyday but precious moments serve as our driving force, to reignite our passion and to rekindle our dream as we continue with our work.

The ever-changing situation with COVID-19 certainly presents a challenging time for everyone. Yet, I have witnessed how English teachers have learnt from the experiences of class suspension last year and taken active steps to enliven English learning and teaching in this academic year. The articles in this issue of the NET Scheme News will tell you how our English teachers continue to explore different innovative ways to enrich students' English learning experiences through different platforms, including introducing a penpal activity to allow students to build friendship with those overseas, and helping students with visual impairment to learn English through adapting the framework of our literacy programme. You will also read about how teachers have worked around the clock to overcome challenges to build up students' confidence in public speaking. One example is how our popular puppetry competition has adopted a video format to allow students to continue to shine on stage this year. What has been collectively achieved by our teachers is nothing short of inspirational.

With the NET Section doing our very best during this highly fluid period, we have also stayed flexible to ensure that both English teachers' and students' learning is adequately supported. We are definitely changing the way we work as creatively as we can. Apart from providing tailored support by our ATs and RNCs through online conference apps, different e-learning platforms and apps are fully exploited to enable us to continue to deliver our professional development programmes and build collegial partnership with English teachers during this unusual time.

Understandably, we cannot do this alone and we look forward to working alongside all our English teachers. Together we can make a difference as we collaborate to improve learning and create opportunities for learning, regardless of where that learning takes place.

Please check our website to keep up to date with news of learning and teaching at the most professional level and to keep track of the latest developments in the NET Section.

Iris Chan
Chief Curriculum Development Officer, NET Section

Ms Iris Chan (centre) with editorial team

Increasing Understanding of Global Communities

Our school, Tsang Mui Millenium School located in Sheung Shui, began a penpal activity in April 2020 to provide authentic English learning experiences for the students. It began as a fun activity, and it became more meaningful during the face-to-face class suspension. With over 50 of our students writing to their overseas penpals at our current partner schools across France, India, South Korea and the USA, the activity has now blossomed and is very popular and successful.

In a world where instantaneous conversation is at our fingertips, writing letters still has its unique appeal. During the current pandemic, when face-to-face communication came to a standstill and the global community was restricted to connecting via social media and instant messaging, the idea of hand writing and decorating a personal letter to new friends was heart-warming. As students have learnt letter writing in English lessons, writing to penpals gave them a purposeful and practical use of the acquired language skills.

Writing to a penpal was an effective way to not only practise English skills; it also gave our students an opportunity to learn about different cultures and hobbies. One of the penpals from the USA wrote about going duck hunting. This was quite interesting for our students as it is a completely alien hobby to both my students and to me (I come from the UK!). Another penpal from India wrote some fascinating facts about their Diwali festival celebrations and the special 'payasam' desserts they make for the occasion. Seeing that our students are extremely

engaged in this authentic writing activity, we intend for them to forge long-term friendships that will hopefully reinforce the cultural learning that this activity promotes.

As with any activity involving our students, safety is paramount. Therefore, letters do not include any student addresses or phone numbers. However, students personalise the letters by sharing their photographs to make the exchange more meaningful. To ensure complete safety for students, I read each letter as does the teacher in the partner school. Teachers then scan and email the letters to the teachers in the corresponding schools.

To expand our network of partner schools next year, we have already contacted more schools in other countries such as Australia, Canada, France, Spain and Ukraine. Having a wide network of partner schools will help ensure the long-term sustainability of the penpal activity. The school also plans to include writing to senior citizens living in retirement homes as it will help foster positive caring values in our students. Our students are now looking forward to sending small gifts to their penpals as a token of appreciation and gratitude. While this activity might be considered quaint, we hope the activity not only provides our students with the opportunity to build positive relationships and increase understanding of global communities but it also helps revive the excitement of receiving letters from friends!

Oliver Knowles
NET, Tsang Mui Millenium School

> There are lots of other countries that want to be our penpals.
>
> Mr Oliver

> **I love writing letters to my penpal.**
> Toby (P6)

> **I had a lot of fun!**
> Turbo (P3)

> **It is great fun getting to know students from other countries.**
> Kayden (P6)

> **I would like to visit my penpal in India.**
> Ronny (P6)

> **My Korean penpal is very nice.**
> Cynthia (P4)

> **Hopefully I can continue to write to my penpal when I go to High School.**
> Sandford (P6)

> **Next year I can write to a new penpal in a different country.**
> Jason (P5)

> **It is fun to learn about my American penpal.**
> Kingsley (P6)

> **Next year when I am in P3 I can keep writing to my new friend.**
> Zoey (P2)

At Dharwad International School, we had a great experience of conducting our penpal activity with Tsang Mui Millennium Primary School (TMMS) in Hong Kong. Our students from Grade 1 to Grade 7 are very excited to have made friends with students in Hong Kong. They are learning about a new culture and ways of living, which has really sparked a curiosity amongst all the students.

This activity has been a lot of fun and we are still exchanging many letters.

Aanchal Sethi Kongawad
Principal, Dharwad International
Residential School (India)

Comments from students in India

Aishwarya Ambannavar (Grade 5)

My penpal's name is Ginny. I like writing to her. I would like to talk to her face to face and meet her one day.
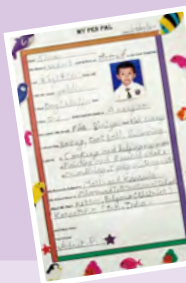
Nidhi N. (Grade 2)

My penpal's name is Cindy. I feel like meeting her in person or via video call. It's been great exchanging letters.

Pragati (Grade 7)

I like making a new friend from another country.

Images courtesy of our partner school in India

Reading Buddies – Just What We Wanted

Reading Buddies is an extracurricular activity that pairs different grade-level students for face-to-face book sharing and reading comprehension time in our library. We aim to provide our P1 students with more opportunities to read some fun English library books. Unfortunately, we have not been able to meet our P1 students face-to-face that often this year because of the pandemic.

How can we benefit from the Reading Buddies Programme if we cannot meet and share books? What can we do – either great or small – to benefit most of our students today? How about we videotape our P5 and P6 students reading books and then broadcast those videos to our homebound P1 students? That sounds like a workable solution. This is how we made it happen.

First, we got permission from parents for our volunteers to come to our school for a couple of hours to read books in front of our video camera. Two English teachers and a cameraman were on hand to help each student prepare for their video recordings. During rehearsals, teachers monitored and coached buddies to speak more clearly and to perfect their pronunciation, intonation, word stress, and reading pace. We observed that the buddies gradually became more confident and competent each time they read their stories to the camera. Once they rehearsed and performed several times, you could see them loosening up and enjoying the process. They got into their zone. What's more, it felt good to know that they did something well for their fellow students. This invaluable learning experience was just what we wanted to offer to our students.

Stephen Isaacson
NET, CCC Kei Faat Primary School (Yau Tong)

Recent school closures brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a surge of online learning and teaching for which few teachers had been trained. Consequently, most teachers simply had to learn as they went along. With *Zoom* skills quickly mastered however, teachers also soon learnt that teaching online presents challenges. For example, there is no regular face-to-face interaction, many students do not turn on their cameras, questions are not answered in the usual way (if at all), and when mics are unmuted there may be a cacophony of background noise. Help is at hand however. Keric Lee, an EPC at SKH Yuen Chen Maun Chen Jubilee Primary School, has some useful tips to help enhance teachers' online experiences. He made those tips into the poster on the left which he hopes teachers will find useful.

Keric Lee
EPC, SKH Yuen Chen Maun Chen Jubilee Primary School

bit.ly/2E8GfnP

Reading Programme

Be a Book Boss! This is our new slogan at St. Bonaventure Catholic Primary School here in Diamond Hill. Creating an English environment has been a challenge this academic year with half-day school, online learning and unpredictable suspension and resumption schedules. This year our school brought on two more school 'NETs' to create an atmosphere of English on a day-to-day basis where students can interact and communicate with all our English teachers in fun and unconventional ways other than focusing solely on our English Thursdays. Around November 2020, after the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic hit us all, another suspension began. With frustration in the air amongst teachers and students due to the pressure to complete the curriculum, assessments and exams, it was imperative for the NETs to take a step back and see how we could contribute to making English learning fun again, or at least until we could come back and do it face-to-face.

The teams of 'NETs' came together and created the idea of *Be a Book Boss Reading Programme* as a way to make reading fun and enjoyable again. In the regular English curriculum, both the Local English Teachers (LETs) and the NET make use of a variety of reading modes and strategies to encourage learning from authentic texts, but the art of reading aloud, storytelling and reading for fun had become neglected in our school. As a result, a team of English teachers with the support of the Campus TV team began recording stories. Currently, we have finished filming our first season and it explores the amazing tales written by Julia Donaldson. The coming seasons will include a series about emotions and how we can handle them, and the third season focuses on recent and unconventional story books. I look forward to the book called *I've Broken my Bum!*.

Branching off from the *Be a Book Boss Reading Programme,* we have reinstated the English Sharing experience through a new platform that involves the whole school through *Google Classroom* and a *Google Site*. The content includes that of the reading programme and also other videos, games, crafts and competitions so there is more for our students to enjoy and explore beyond the classroom. You may be wondering though, what about the response from parents and students? Well, without a doubt it has been mixed. From one perspective, it does increase screen time and after a long half-day of online lessons, a few parents tend to restrict their children from enjoying the content we create to protect their children's eyes. However, the majority of the students and parents from P1 to P4 are enjoying the content immensely. With the integration of easy activities that students can follow up after listening to the stories, students can take part in regular games and activities posted on the *Google Classroom* and *Google Sites* designed by our teachers and read announcements about small events during recess when students return to school. After a gloomy first term, it is nice to see an abundance of smiles and sounds of laughter showing a love for English as well as those constant tugs on our clothes about how many *ClassDojo* points they are earning by participating.

At the end of the day, the programme has been successful, and we do hope to continue this in our school even when everything returns to normal. The channels we have created have developed better communication opportunities for students and teachers. Truth be told, it can be hard to motivate students into wanting to learn, let alone using English beyond the classroom. However, when teachers see students who have refrained from speaking English their entire primary school life come up to them and have a conversation in broken English, it feels that we have achieved something in creating a safe and nurturing environment. Not to mention, an added benefit has been using these platforms as a great promotion tool for school open days in attracting new students, and in the process of hiring new English teachers as now, our faces are everywhere.

If you are interested, feel free to visit our Google Site and our Campus TV YouTube Channel.

Google Site

YouTube

Kenton McElhone
NET, St Bonaventure Catholic Primary School

Bringing Puppetry into the Classroom

The 'Story to Stage' Puppetry Competition for Primary Schools Project was implemented in the 2014/15 school year. Since then, it has gained momentum with an increasing number of schools participating each year.

The training opportunities provided by the Competitions prove enjoyable for both students and teachers. Between the 2014/15 and 2018/19 school years, a total of 290 schools have participated in the Competition. In the 2019/20 school year, the Competition was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which was a disappointment to the 54 schools already enrolled. In the 2020/21 school year, 62 schools had initially enrolled for the Competition. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, the competition format had to be changed from live performances to video submissions. Hence, only 36 schools stayed in the Competition this year.

Apart from the competition, an initiative on 'Bringing Puppetry into the Classroom' has been introduced to bring puppetry into the classrooms to enliven the lessons and make a greater impact on students' learning. With much success, the new initiative has since then been promoted in the primary English classrooms to benefit the wider school community.

In fact, puppetry is viewed as an innovative learning and teaching strategy for teaching English to primary school students, in particular, for the ESL and SEN students. The use of puppetry in the classroom has proven to:

- raise students' motivation in English lessons;
- engage students in lesson tasks and activities; and
- make the lessons fun.

In their school-based curriculum planning for English lessons, teachers could design activities incorporating puppetry to teach:

- vocabulary, songs, idioms, topics about weather reports and animals;
- theme-based textbook topics and materials.

To support teachers who are implementing 'Bringing Puppetry into the Classroom', the NET Section:

- has organised professional development workshops and experience-sharing seminars for teachers;
- has developed a range of resources for schools, e.g. a resource kit with 10-lesson activities;
- loans puppetry tents to schools;
- provides the following resources:
  - videos on how puppetry could be integrated into daily lessons;
  - videos on the making of puppets, props and backdrops; and
  - an instructional video on puppetry performance.

These resources could be accessed at *https://nets.edb.hkedcity.net/page.php?p=439.*

Patricia Wong
Project Manager (Puppetry in English)

# Enhancing Learning and Teaching with Digtial Puppetry

Using digital puppetry as a tool to enhance your teaching and learning strategies can positively affect children's confidence, language and creative abilities. There is a growing array of apps that encourage verbal expression and creativity, integrating language learning with technology.
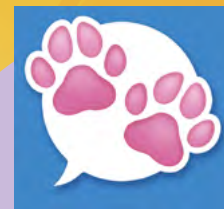
For a start, you might want to look at:

Toontastic
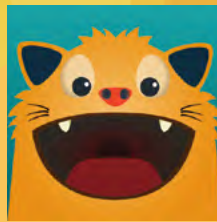
Chatterbox

My Talking Pet

These apps lend themselves to a variety of learning engagements, especially for practising dialogue while promoting various educational goals, and specifically for getting students motivated, engaged and connected.

Digital puppetry also allows for spontaneous script changes and multiple takes. Catherine Ousselin asserts that "as students build confidence through short, memorised chunks, they can begin branching off into more sophisticated forays." Students can personalise their scripts by including personal images to build confidence.

However, with any of these apps, headphones are a must to help cancel out background classroom noise. Try these apps if you want your students to:

- develop confidence in their natural and purposeful ESL speaking;

- express their intrinsic desire to write and speak in ESL; and

- develop expressive speaking and drama abilities.

Of course, it is important to try these apps yourself to get an understanding of their potential before introducing them to your students. I recommend selecting more straightforward apps to begin with and show students a sample of one of them to spark their interest. My suggestions would be:

My Talking Pet: allows you to make funny, cute animal videos

Chatterbox: allows you to turn any picture into funny animations that you can save, email or share.

Alcides Campbell
Advisory Teacher, NET Section

Reference
Ousselin, C. (2015). Engaging assessments for speaking and listening in *Learning Languages* (pp. 13-15).

Facing Challenges by Building on Strengths

Once a busy place to conduct the Primary Literacy Programme – Reading and Writing (PLP-R/W), this year the reading room has been quiet as most of our lessons have moved online due to the school suspension. Fortunately, established practices have helped us to transition smoothly to online learning, and at the same time, to build on the strengths that we have and to explore opportunities.

Established Practices

Established practices have helped us greatly to transition smoothly to online learning. Our school is a WiFi 100 school and has been a BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) school since 2015. As a result, teachers and students are familiar with using *Google Classroom* and other e-learning apps in their daily teaching and learning. We have been using *Class Dojo* for a number of years now, with communication between teachers and parents having been established. A strong culture in co-teaching has also enabled us to make the transition smoothly. The local English teachers and I continue to co-teach online lessons, with the classroom assistant providing support.

Building on Strengths

A challenge for us is to build on the strengths that we have. We want our online teaching and learning situations to be as interactive and engaging as possible. Information technology tools such as *Nearpod*'s 'Time to Climb' and *Padlet* fit the bill. We use the former to revise high frequency words and the latter for brainstorming. In the lesson, students compete as well as engage and collaborate with each other despite not being together in the same room or place. We found e-tools like *Nearpod* to be highly effective in terms of online teaching and learning as they allow us to see students' progress live and provide them with instant feedback.

We use *Padlet* in the P2 unit 'Souperman', where students collaborate in their online lessons to brainstorm different food adjectives for their menus. Even though we cannot see our students face-to-face, through the use of IT, we can still be effective facilitators in the context of online learning and teaching.

Since we have 3 to 4 teachers for every PLP-R/W lesson, we decided to put the resources and manpower to good use. We utilise the *Zoom* breakout room feature and divide the students into small groups so as to cater for individual differences. In fact, group work on *Zoom* has been so successful that we do so for guided reading, speaking and writing activities. For instance, with guided reading, we divide students into ability groups, and we use the annotate function on *Nearpod* such as highlighting, drawing and writing to support students when working through the text. To our surprise, some students have become quite confident in learning online. This applies especially to the shy students who would be more reluctant to participate in a classroom face-to-face setting.

The learning curve for the teachers has been quite steep but fortunately, our school has been providing ongoing support for teachers to extend their knowledge and capacity in using e-learning. Furthermore, we were introduced to *Mentimeter* over a year ago, and we have attended several courses to learn about its features and how it can be effectively applied to our daily lessons, onsite or offsite, in order to make our lessons effective, motivating and engaging.

Exploring Opportunities

Since the change of mode in learning and teaching has evolved, our school has created a PLP-R/W website which allows students to do self-directed learning and it has become a convenient way for teachers to make use of the resources and materials from the programme. The e-read scheme by Hong Kong Education City has also been incorporated into the programme, which allows students access to home readers.

The past year and a half has been quite a journey for both students and teachers. We have learnt a lot things and made a lot of changes but overall, it has been an enlightening journey.

Maria Goretti Wong
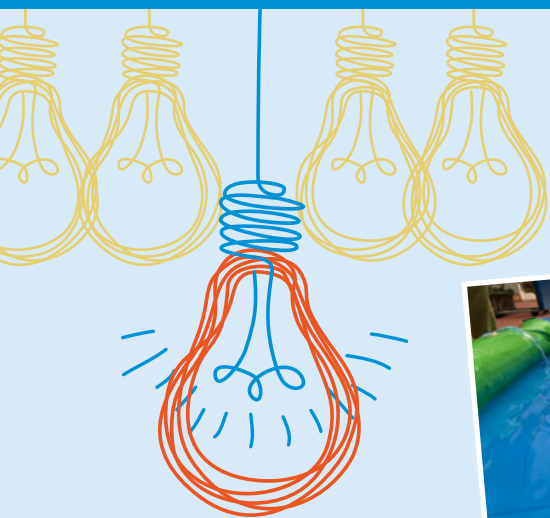**NET, Po Yan Oblate Primary School**

Learning Support teacher (right) co-teaching with the LET (left) and NET during the online PLP-R/W lessons

The LET conducting small group work during online PLP-R/W lessons

NET (centre) and classroom teachers greeting students at the start of the PLP-R/W lesson

Building on Strength Through Reading across the Curriculum (RaC)

Introduction

English teachers in primary schools are constantly trying to ignite the love of reading and to promote it to our students. Motivation and interest in reading needs to be nurtured over time and teachers need to find ways to sustain students' interest and continue to develop and cultivate their literacy skills to prepare them for secondary schools. Our school saw the need to address this by providing a stimulating opportunity for students through Reading across the Curriculum (RaC).

RaC aims to enhance students' reading strategies and to establish meaningful links between concepts and ideas in different Key Learning Areas (KLAs). Our goal is to design a STEAM week project in P3 that connects students' learning experience with other KLAs and broadens students' knowledge. We feel that providing a purpose for students to read, write and apply their knowledge would enable them to learn at a deeper level.

Background

Our school is currently in the final year of implementing the Space Town Literacy Programme in KS1 (Space Town). It has provided our students with a strong literacy

foundation as it focuses on explicitly teaching reading and writing strategies through a variety of text types and approaches. As a result, students are motivated and enjoy doing home reading and guided reading. Also, the process writing approach has guided students to take more ownership over their writing, with positive results.

KLA Collaboration

The P3 Space Town unit 'Green Earth Project Week' provided the perfect opportunity to connect English learning with other KLAs and have students apply the reading and writing skills they have learnt in an authentic context. The General Studies and Math KLAs were identified as suitable for a STEAM project under the broad theme of environmental protection.

In the English lessons, students learnt about the concept of reduce, reuse and recycle. Students had to read a procedural text to make a rubber band powered car from recycled materials. Students then tested their cars and reflected on how far the cars travelled and how they could improve on them. Students then wrote a recount about their experience and shared it on *Seesaw* App.

In General Studies, teachers introduced the concepts of weather (hot and cold temperatures) and reaction force. Students had the opportunity to understand the scientific method through activities that included observation, analysing data and drawing conclusions.

In Maths, teachers introduced the units 'Quadrilaterals', 'Length and Distance' and 'Four Arithmetic Operations', and students learnt about the concept of measurement. This included the units of measurement and how they relate to each as well as recording the distances between objects with the appropriate measurement unit. Students had to recognise the concept of parallel lines and perform mixed operations of addition and subtraction of three numbers. Students had the opportunity to apply the concepts in practical situations.

The STEAM Project

The objective of the project was for students to integrate and apply their knowledge in Maths, General Studies (GS) and English to build a balloon powered boat and to test it. Students would then write a recount of their experience. The underlying goal of the project was to promote environmental awareness and protection.

First a KWL was done to activate students' prior knowledge about building a balloon powered boat as well as the targeted concepts in GS and Maths. This also gave the teachers an opportunity to build upon the already scaffolded character strength of curiosity, as each month our school focuses on a new character strength. Once the STEAM project was completed, the students came back to the KWL to reflect on their learning experience.

Then the basic concepts of reaction force and measurement were revisited through various videos, activities and worksheets. After that, the students followed a procedural text accompanied by an instructional video to make a balloon powered boat. Pools were set up in the playground for students to test their boats. Students had to measure how far their boat travelled in centimetres using their prior knowledge of measurement from Maths. The GS concept of reaction force was reiterated during the boat test as students tested their boats with balloons of three different sizes and marked down which balloon made the boat travel further. The biggest balloon made the boat travel the furthest which showed the students that it had the most force. After the test, students had to write a recount of their experience.

Finally, the students were engaged in a variety of reflection and assessment techniques. Students had to plan an oral presentation to present their findings to the class. Within the presentation, students had to also explain the learning process and steps such as hypothesise, design, build, test, reflect and present. Skill-based assessment focused on searching and finding the correct relevant information. The various self-reflection techniques included rubrics, open-ended questions and guiding questions for improvement in the categories of knowledge, skills and attitude.

The students enjoyed learning the content in a different context and commented that they loved the project integrating subjects into one task. The teachers felt that the project initiated a deeper understanding of the various targeted concepts and peaked the students' interest in learning on a more profound level. Student motivation was high as they found the project stimulating and engaging. The project was successful in integrating Reading across the Curriculum.

Josh Blyth, NET, CCC Kei Chun Primary School, and Jeff Wall, Advisory Teacher, NET Section

Teaching English Beyond Sight

In the visual world, people with vision seldom get the opportunity to find out what it is like to be a person with Visual Impairment (VI) unless they explore such opportunity. What is your perception of VI? Do you envision a person with dark tinted glasses, walking with a white cane and accompanied by a guide dog? In Hong Kong, 4% of the population is Visually Impaired, of which more than half have multiple disabilities; for example, VI with autism spectrum disorder, VI with hearing impairment or VI with intellectual disorder. VI represents a range of functional disabilities related to sight, from low vision to total blindness that cannot be corrected with optical lenses. People with low vision are often referred to as visually impaired, while those with no vision are referred to as blind.

Interestingly, the *Dialogue in the Dark* experience requests you to use a walking cane and you will realise how important the white walking cane is, but more importantly, how you will rely on listening, smell, and touch to survive in the dark. You will quickly learn that the 800 clicks per minute of the traffic light means it is safe to cross the road and the raised dotted and lined blocks on the pavement support your orientation and mobility to allow you to track your way.

Alumnus of both the Ebenezer School and Home of the Visually Impaired, Curtis Lin turned blind at the age of 14 when he began his studies as a S3 student. After becoming disabled, he was devastated and as a young adolescent, he hardly had anything to smile about during the first six months at the school. He slowly learned to take care of himself by learning about orientation and mobility, independent living, social interaction, recreation, leisure as well as career education. Through self-determination, he gradually became more outgoing, confident, and adventurous. In 2013, Curtis was signed up for a role in the musical *The Awakening*, which was then turned into a documentary film, *My Voice My Life*, directed by Oscar-winning director, Ruby Yang. Soon, Curtis was no longer the timid boy with low self-esteem

but became aware that disability would never define him. He is currently studying a Government and Public Administration Major at CUHK.

Now can you imagine how challenging it can be for a student with VI to learn English as a second language?

During the logographic phase, a beginner reader relies on fractional clues and pattern recognition to support language development. This developmental phase does not always happen for a student with VI due to the degree of their visual impairment. However, students with VI develop phonological and phonemic awareness skills at similar rates and in a similar order as sighted children because these skills do not require visual input. Remarkably, blind students do better at phonemic awareness than children with low vision. During the alphabetic stage, research found that struggling readers with VI have difficulty associating letters with sounds and they can easily fall two grade levels behind their sighted peers in reading speed and accuracy. Students who are blind often have a literal understanding of a word through memorisation of the definition, rather than a relational understanding between and among words based on the concepts the words describe, e.g. comparisons, differences, or generalisations (Kamei Hanna & Ansari Ricci, 2015).

Maryanne Wolf (2007) believes that learning to read is a miraculous process as the human brain was never born to read. Students with VI enter school with so many disadvantages which require the teachers to be specially trained and well informed. The factors that can impair holistic language development include a lack of background knowledge and limited vocabulary. Other factors influencing students' reading levels can be stamina, fatigue, lighting conditions, size of the print, distance to the print and clarity of the printed materials such as the contrast, clutter, font and style. This is where the wonderful work done in the English room of the Ebenezer School stands out.

Starting from September 2020, the Primary Literacy Programme – Reading and Writing (PLP-R/W) has been adapted by the school to support the Primary One English curriculum. Though the class includes students with a great range of learning diversity, developing students' phonological awareness is still the first priority in learning English. The Advisory Teacher supports the NET and the Local English Teacher (LET) in

co-planning meetings to design adapted unit frameworks incorporating PLP-R/W to cater for the students' specific needs.

Various learning resources are made and introduced to support the students to learn the letter-sound relationship. Adapted alphabet chants edited in the *Keynote* mobile app and letter books as well as small books in the *Space Town Go!* app have enhanced students' self-learning at home during the pandemic. Interactive activities such as using the *Sound Box* help to consolidate students' vocabulary building during face-to-face lessons.

For reading and writing, big books, relevant songs and chants of each unit are utilised as the key reading materials. This includes enlarged versions of the content words supported with visual pictures. Writing tasks are designed to focus on specific sentence structures of each unit in a developmental manner. Eventually, students start copying sentences in the 2nd term.

The *Keynote* app helps to develop the students' capability to read high frequency words (HFW). *Keynote* uses Comic Sans and Arial as font types and font sizes are 36 and above. Formatting options can be adjusted to meet students' unique visual needs. Another essential setting in *Keynote* is its audio support, especially for those students who have not been exposed to reading materials. Checklists of the HFW are recorded by parents

and students together to monitor students' own pace of learning. Furthermore, the first dictation in P1 is a fun activity which focuses on identifying the beginning sound of the words.

Students with VI have varying sensitivity to brightness and therefore the degree of brightness in classrooms is adjustable to cater for different students. For instance, there are two fluorescent tubes in each section of light fittings, so different degrees of brightness can be attained in different corners of the classroom. In addition, curtains are used to block excessive sunlight from entering the room.

The students receive pre-Braille training at P1 and P2 where they get to try typing on the brailler, understand the formation of Braille and learn to correctly place their fingers on the brailler. By the end of the second year, they should be able to type some letters. Then students will receive proper Braille training where they learn the contractions and the short forms, the Braille rules and how to increase their reading and typing speed.

So, when you cross the streets of Hong Kong again and hear the loud clicks when the pedestrian light turns green, think of students with VI and the physical and environmental challenges they face, and also remember the additional challenges they need to overcome in learning English. Let us celebrate the achievements they gain in learning English 'Beyond Sight' at the Ebenezer School.

Sandy Chan, NET, Tai Cheuk Ying, Rondy, LET, Ebenezer School and Joey Venter, Advisory Teacher, NET Section

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Ready, Set, Talk!

What do you get when you cross a presentation with lashings of logical argument, a smattering of good conversation, a modicum of multi-media support and some drama thrown in for good measure? The short answer is that you have all the fun and excitement of the 'Time to Talk' competition.

This competition, currently operating at the secondary level, encourages students to deliver a group presentation which addresses an overarching idea. Each group can select from eight ideas and then give an original presentation which takes the concept in any direction. The topics are varied and encourage the students to be creative in the way that they construct their entries. No two entries are the same and this makes for a very interesting competition.

One of the challenges of this competition is that participants not only have to present in a group, but they are required to make their presentation compelling for the audience. The presentation must involve an accompanying PowerPoint, so students must select appropriate images in the form of graphs, charts, infographics or pictures which further their ideas in a meaningful way. The competition is a forum for students to co-construct a speech that is conversational but at the same time informative. It is not a debate, a reading

or a role play, but perhaps a mixture of all of these. It is Time to Talk.

Flexibility in design and implementation has been a catch-cry for the 'Time to Talk' team over the past couple of years and no more obviously can this be witnessed than in the Time to Talk competition. Some schools ran the competition across a whole year level, some organised a club for the specific purpose of training students in these skills while some opened up their competition to the whole school.

Even when faced with a pandemic, teachers and students have found creative ways to work as a team and go through processes to reach a very polished final performance. Schools complete a Round 1 mini-competition in their school and then one team is chosen to move on to the finals. When students couldn't meet face to face, they connected online. The way the schools organised the competition was very closely related to the parameters introduced because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Round 1 in the school often took the form of a *Zoom* presentation when face-to-face presentation was considered too challenging.

Everyone found a way around the difficulties of the current situation. In fact, the lack of face-to-face contact sometimes produced unexpected positive outcomes. Teachers recognised that some students took a real lead in these situations, taking on the roles of organisers, designers, supporters and givers of feedback.

In this competition students deliver ideas not just as a talking head but by including active, dramatised conversation and role-play which add to the point that they are making. While one group focused on the intercultural challenges of understanding table manners, another prioritised the use of polite exchanges like 'please', 'thank you'

and expressions of gratitude in their 'Manners Matter' presentation. The use of simple props like oranges, water bottles and even toilet tissue clarified the ideas presented in 'I can't imagine life without it', adding humour and a different dimension to the speech, making the topic much more accessible to their audience.

The benefits for students were displayed not only in the final presentations but the collaborative approach with which they planned their ideas and extended their original concepts. Students learned to draft, edit, tinker and tweak. The process became genuinely collaborative through the acceptance of the ideas of others, sometimes meaning that there was a need to reject their own ideas. Students who were less confident in speaking were supported by others and could actively take part in the competition. Many students said that the difficulties they faced at the start were lessened by being able to work in a group.

It has been amazing to witness the achievements of students across schools who have tirelessly worked toward completing presentations for the competition. The aim of the competition was to improve students' presentation skills while giving them a comfortable and supportive environment in which to do so. We hope that schools will enter again next school year, and we look forward to expanding our competition.

Luana Hasell
Regional NET Coordinator, NET Section

Students from CCC Fong Yun Wah Secondary School with their teacher, Mr Terry Mulrooney (NET)

Students from CUHK FAA Chan Chun Ha Secondary School with Mr Elliot Rawdin (NET), Ms Priscilla Lui and Ms Luana Hasell

Let Learning and Teaching Blossom Through School-based Support

Several years ago, the English panel at Lui Cheung Kwong Lutheran College in Tuen Mun was looking for external resources to help them develop the reading comprehension ability of their students. They were aware that the weaker students lacked the necessary skills and so the teachers were seeking new strategies to raise students' interest and enthusiasm.

The Lui Cheung Kwong Lutheran College Team:
Stephanie Yim, English Panel Chair, Angel Lo, Junior English
Panel Chair, and English teachers, Mercy Chan and Rita Lai
with Julien Hawthorne and Catherine Lam, Regional NET
Coordinators, NET Section

The EPC, Stephanie Yim, and the Junior EPC, Angel Lo, decided to attend some EDB workshops to get some ideas. The first workshop they attended was delivered by the NET Section. It was called *From Critical Thinking to Critical Literacy: Developing Smart Readers Through Identifying Teachable Moments in English Reading Lessons.* The content covered basic reading comprehension skills and also introduced the Four Resources Model which posits that reading is a social activity in which the reader plays the roles of Code-breaker, Text Participant, Text User and Text Analyst.

Stephanie and Angel thought this framework had the potential to assist their panel with new strategies for teaching reading skills, so they applied for school-based support from the NET Section to help them introduce the pedagogy to their colleagues. A collegial relationship thus began and has since grown and proved fruitful over time.

Four workshops were presented to the whole panel in the first year of support. The first workshop, conducted in August 2020 in preparation for the 2020/21 school year, focused on helping teachers to expand their understanding of the reading process, in particular how the

graphophonic, syntactic and semantic cueing systems work together in the mind of the reader. Reading comprehension skills were identified and ways to teach them were explored.

The second workshop was held during the uniform test period in November 2020 and focused more on pedagogy. Teachers explored the use of authentic texts for identifying text grammar; the use of graphic organisers for making learning visible; and the use of multiple readings to move students from a basic comprehension of the text to an understanding of how the text is constructed to influence the reader. Each reading of the text builds on the previous reading and enables the reader to dig a little deeper and understand more about the text, e.g. its purpose and influence, and how the language is used to position the topic, audience and author.

The third workshop took place during the exams in January 2021 and focused on the use of past Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) reading papers for teaching both reading and writing skills through text analysis. The text type and the use of specific grammar and vocabulary items were made explicit and investigated for the role they played in supporting the purpose of the text and influencing the audience. Elements of critical literacy were introduced, the less obvious purposes of the texts were exposed, and the social impacts of the texts were explored.

The final workshop revisited the Four Resources Model, reading comprehension skills, text analysis, multiple readings and the use of text sets, i.e. a variety of multimodal and multi-genre texts on the same topic used to recycle language and offer a variety of entry points to cater for learner diversity. A wide range of text types, such as films, film trailers, film reviews, articles, images, advertisements, infographics, webpages and videos, were used in the workshop to demonstrate how to develop a text set on a particular topic.

CRAAP TEST –
To assess information we read or view:

C	Currency: The timeliness of the info
R	Relevance: How the info fits your needs
A	Authority: The source of the info
A	Accuracy: Reliability and correctness of the info
P	Purpose: The reason the info exists

Evaluating Sources

- **Relevance** — Does it suit my purpose?
- **Currency** — How up-to-date is the info?
- **Authority** — An expert? Is bias evident?
- **Accuracy** — Fact or Opinion? References?
- **Purpose** — To inform? To persuade? To sell?

Over the past two years, teachers met with NET Section support officers during timetabled co-planning meetings to collaborate on designing lessons that implemented the ideas presented in the workshops. While adopting new pedagogy can be challenging, the enthusiasm and open-mindedness of the teachers resulted in new ways of looking at how they could best meet their students' needs. Amid the school closures during both the social unrest and then the social restrictions created by COVID-19, the teachers continued to adapt their teaching style to incorporate even more new ideas related to e-learning and on-line delivery of lessons, e.g. the use of apps to make learning visible, collaborative activities and, in particular, the CRAAP test (**C**urrency, **R**elevance, **A**uthority, **A**ccuracy and **P**urpose).

Given the infinite supply of information on the Internet and the dubious quality of much of it, the CRAAP test is an essential strategy for participating in 21st century texts. Having been introduced to the teachers through the focus on information literacy, it has now become a permanent fixture in both the senior and junior secondary schemes of work, and questions about these aspects of a text are included in the uniform tests and examination papers. The students have responded well to the use of relevant, authentic texts and have become more willing to answer questions independently and have performed better on questions that they would previously answer incorrectly or not attempt at all.

Focusing on the CRAAP test, and the ways in which both text grammar and use of vocabulary position topics has given teachers a strong direction for identifying teaching focuses that are contextualised and meaningful, and these are best found in authentic texts. In general, the teachers can now better apply sound pedagogical theories to their classroom activities and believe that the support they received from the NET Section has been instrumental in helping them achieve this.

Julien Hawthorne
Regional NET Coordinator, NET Section

Benefits of using digital devices to learners

[11] As Vawn Himmelsbach, Education Technology writer, points out; there are seemingly lots of reasons why online digital devices help in the learning environment. Not only do students have access to a vast world of information and learning materials but that this kind of technology allows students to learn at their own pace through individualized instruction. Also, rather than just passively learning in the classroom, kids become much more interactive with the teacher who thus becomes more of an advisor or coach as the kids explore their learning more independently.

[12] Lastly, using online polls, quizzes and similar activities could help engage all students, including those who are normally shy and wouldn't always raise their hand in class to participate.

[13] It's no wonder that, in a recent survey, around 75% of educators think technology has a positive impact in the education process.

Questions to ponder when we read
- **Who wrote** this text?
- What is the **purpose** of this text?
- How does the author **position the topic**? (e.g. technology / digital devices)
- How is the positioning made clear?
- Whose **voice is NOT heard** from the text?
- Who **benefit(s) from** the text?
- What is the **social impact** of this text?

4. Who are the target audience of this text?
- **Educators** _____ who are using **digital devices in teaching** _____
- People who are interested in the topic of **digital devices for learning purposes** _____

The Show Must Go… ON AIR

Our much-loved improvised drama competition, Speak Up – Act Out! (SU–AO!) has been running since the early noughties and attracts 50-60 schools each year. The competition sessions are a time of union when we can share the joy of story and drama, and creative expression in English gathered together in the same space. Of course, with the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic, sharing the same space became impossible. Along with all the other disruption to secondary education, SU–AO! 2019/20 bit the dust. When it came to the 2020/21 school year, we were determined to find a solution that would make the competition COVID-proof so that it could run regardless of whatever social distancing requirements were in place.

The SU-AO! On Air! Team (from left): Raymond Yip, Richard Cowler and teacher assistant, Terry Cheng, NET Section

We had already innovated in March 2019 by introducing the *1-day* category to SU–AO! where we invited teams to prepare and perform their dramas all in one day, with the students working without their teachers. The students revelled in the opportunity to work by themselves and to take full ownership of their dramas. The power of self-directed learning was strongly evident in the students' enjoyment, energy and engagement in both the preparation and performance of these dramas.

With the experience of the *1-day* category, we felt sure that our SU-AO! students would be ready to take on another challenge so we developed a COVID-proof contingency for 2020/21. This was to create two new categories, *1-day* and *2-week* On Air!, in which the students would prepare and present radio dramas using cloud computing and a video conferencing platform. 35 schools took on the challenge. Students used *Google Docs* so that they could work together wherever they were. They wrote a plan and then their radio drama script which they then used to perform live, experimenting with voices and sound effects to create settings, characters and actions.

Credit must go to the students who were able to familiarise themselves so quickly with the medium of radio drama, finding and playing sound effects, practising with a script and delivering the lines in a fresh and lively way. With the challenge of just having voice and sound to paint a picture for an audience, many of them were nervous about their performing live online. Students used their own voices, recorded sound effects or objects in the room. Often, the sound effects made with their own voices were most effective.

There were some technical and administrative challenges, but all were successfully overcome. Teachers made good use of technology to scan the competition forms they needed to submit and we made use of cloud computing to collect information about the teams and students, and for the judges to share their marks. *Google Forms* and *Google Sheets* were invaluable for this task, though we could just as easily have used the Microsoft alternatives. As we needed to put the students into breakout rooms for preparation periods or to share students' evaluations of the radio dramas, teachers and students needed to identify themselves clearly on *Zoom* with an abbreviated personal and school name. Fortunately for us, our teachers and students were very understanding and realised that good cooperation on their part would lead to a smoothly run competition session. Even so, it took a team of three of us to administer the competition session, each of us with our own computers.

As our year of running the competition sessions for SU-AO! On Air! went on, we added a few touches to try to create an exciting atmosphere in the online format. We added an online lucky wheel of fortune with all the schools' names to draw the next team to perform, an On Air! Radio drama studio picture as our backdrop on *Zoom*, and a dramatic PowerPoint presentation for the announcement of prizes at the end.

We were delighted to have some wonderful judges from a wide variety of educational institutions across Hong Kong who are passionate about English and the performing arts. There were representatives from English Schools Foundation, Independent Schools Foundation, the University of Hong Kong, the performing arts scene in Hong Kong and our own NET Section.

The pandemic has forced us to really exploit the power of technology and to make it work for us in a way we might not have thought possible. This is the new normal that we talk about. We are looking forward to gathering together in the same space to enjoy live drama again, but we are also grateful for the push to set up SU–AO! 'On Air!' and to get a taste of what can be produced with online communication, cloud computing and the creative constraints of painting a dramatic picture with words and sounds in radio drama.

Richard Cowler, Regional NET Coordinator and Raymond Yip, Project Officer, NET Section

Tang Shiu Kin Victoria Government Secondary School

Carmel Secondary School

Law Ting Pong Secondary School

Stage is to actors what water is to fish. As a drama teacher, I always find it thrilling to see my students shine on stage where they can find their confidence, satisfaction and recognition. However, owing to the outbreak of COVID-19, most of the drama activities in school that involve physical contact have been postponed, shelved or even cancelled. It really gnaws at my heart whenever the young talented actors from our Drama Club ask me whether they will have a chance to perform again. When our school's NET, Ms Wong Lai–ling and I came across Speak Up – Act Out! On Air!, neither of us gave it even a second thought and agreed unanimously to join the competition as it offered the glimmer of hope that our S5 students would be on stage again before their graduation.

**Mr Yuen Hau Lung, Samson, drama teacher,
Tang Shiu Kin Victoria Government Secondary School**

Words cannot describe how grateful I am to be given the opportunity to take part in and win such an innovative competition.

Ryan, student, Tang Shiu Kin Victoria Government Secondary School

Heartfelt thanks to the NET Section for providing a platform for my students to create a thoroughly enjoyable, high-quality piece of radio drama in Speak Up – Act Out! On Air!

**Mrs May Wong, advisor of the English Drama Team,
Carmel Secondary School**

SU-AO! was a fantastic experience for our students and provided rare learning opportunities for them. In my experience the students in the Hong Kong education system are taught to follow instructions, memorise answers and demonstrate learned skills on command. But I have not seen much emphasis on independent thinking or initiative. The value of SU-AO! is even greater because it requires skills that Hong Kong students need in the modern world but rarely get to practise within the curriculum. Skills such as creativity, spontaneity, initiative, open-mindedness (to work from unexpected prompts), leadership skills (working without direct teacher supervision) and empathy (developing complex characters far outside their own experience).

The SU-AO! experience allowed our students to bond as trust and friendships grew. I look forward to being involved in SU-AO! again next year.

**Mr Daniel J. Hamilton, NET,
Law Ting Pong Secondary School**

This was my first time participating in an online drama play and I was over the moon.

Before the competition, we first brainstormed the content deeply. During the competition, we tried to be more dramatic in our articulation. When the result was announced, we were on cloud nine! We won the championship and we were incredibly excited.

**Leung Tsz Ho, Elvis, student,
Carmel Secondary School**

The thing I liked the most was writing the script together, because we all made suggestions about what to write. Because of SU-AO!, I now know all my teammates a lot better.

Mandy, student, Law Ting Pong Secondary School

It was exciting to express our creativity and I also learned a lot. It was very challenging to write and rehearse a play on a topic we didn't choose in only 90 minutes. It was very different from all the other competitions.

Sayastha, student, Law Ting Pong Secondary School

Rethinking Our Thinking Routine: Utilising Design Thinking to Foster Creativity in Language Arts

As the 2019/20 school year was coming to an end at STFA Seaward Woo College, plans for the next year were already under way. Our principal, Mr Liu, had expressed his desire for the English department to prepare students for a special presentation. Across the hallway in their IT class, S1 students were creating apps for electronic devices which they would present at a tech expo to be held at the end of the next school year. Our mission was simple: provide students with the skills needed to give a polished tech presentation in English.

We spent some time contemplating how to best bridge the gap between the English and IT departments. What sort of curriculum could we develop to address all of our goals that would also give the students a chance to express their creativity? It was during this time that we received some information regarding an upcoming "Seed" project for the 2020/21 school year: 'Makerspace'. Some lucky schools would be given the support and know-how of experienced professionals (both EDB officers and professors of design and technology from the Hong Kong Polytechnic University) in developing a new curriculum focused on incorporating the ideas of Makerspace into the English language classroom.

For those who are unfamiliar, Makerspace is not necessarily a physical place, but a concept that stresses providing students with the knowledge and materials required to explore their own interests, and to develop creative responses to real-world problems. While its roots may be in STEM, Makerspace is applicable across all subjects, and even outside the classroom. At our school, we quickly saw the possibilities of this "Seed" project to help us create curriculum opportunities beneficial to both our teachers and students across different subjects. After drafting and submitting a proposal, we were happy to be accepted to participate in this "Seed" project.

At the heart of our Makerspace project are 'thinking routines', or systematic ways to approach problems and develop solutions. For example, students may ask, "How can I make this product more environmentally-friendly, appealing, or efficient?" or "What are the parts, purposes and complexities of this system or object?" These thinking routines, along with the design thinking process, comprise the foundation for our curriculum.

A project co-planning meeting

After learning the basics of the design thinking process and exploring the four thinking routines of a 'maker', students were tasked with creating an app for their own start-up company which would fulfill a need or provide a service. Our job in the English classroom was to create the marketing campaign. We began our Makerspace project by analysing the anatomy of product packaging, logos, and slogans to find which types were the most effective for specific apps. Different fonts, colors, layouts, or phrases evoke different feelings from our users, and we needed to find the right ones for our budding companies. The design thinking process guided us through the creation of our companies' brand images, writing and conducting of market research surveys, as well as prototyping and testing of our app models.

STFA SWC MAKERSPACE MOUNTAIN

- App presentations at the STFA SWC Tech Expo
- Presentation skills
- Peer review and focus groups
- Market research and research data presentations
- Social media campaigns
- Product packaging, logos, and slogans
- Makerspace thinking routines

By now, you may be wondering how we connected all of these concepts effectively with language arts. Admittedly, it took a lot of careful planning and communication between teachers in language arts and IT, along with the tried-and-true examples and ideas provided by Albert, the Project Associate, and the design thinking experts at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, and EDB's Regional NET Coordinators (RNCs) Richard Cowler and Stephen Cooley, who have been working on this project since its infancy. We were able to meet regularly to review, evaluate, and adjust our plans for previous and future lessons. By outlining clear language-related learning goals for each lesson (e.g. relevant design vocabulary, grammatical anatomy of slogans, etc), we created lessons rich in cohesive elements of both design and language.

While STEM is finding its way into many areas of education these days, many of the concepts were still foreign to us as English teachers. Working on this cross-curricular project has been invaluable in developing our teachers' capacity to identify opportunities in and outside of the classroom where the Makerspace spirit can be cultivated. We now better identify effective learning and teaching strategies that empower students to discover, create, tinker, experiment and solve problems in English language learning. Additionally, we have learned and implemented new means of assessment, as design thinking employs careful evaluation from teachers, peers, and self-reflection. Making use of these evaluations is an integral, built-in aspect of the design thinking process, and students learn to use the feedback constructively.

The Makerspace project has been a helpful and rewarding experience for our staff and students alike. Whether in the physical classroom or collaborating via online platforms, Makerspace has given our students a chance to flex their creative muscles, and the products speak for themselves. We are grateful for the experience and are eager to continue our development of this project for years to come.

Adam Wittenberg
NET, STFA Seaward Woo College

Read to Speak: Small Steps to Building Confidence

One of the greatest challenges for English teachers is developing in their students the confidence and competence to speak the language. English language lessons generally provide plenty of text to read and comprehension questions to answer. Students are also given ample opportunities to listen to the spoken word and compose written text. However, teaching and learning time is tight and the chances for students to actually speak in an English lesson can be limited. The 'Read to Speak: Developing 21st Century Communication Skills through Interaction with Multigenre and Multimodal Texts (R2S)' "Seed" project seeks to address this issue along with the linguistic, cognitive, physical, social and emotional demands required for oral proficiency.
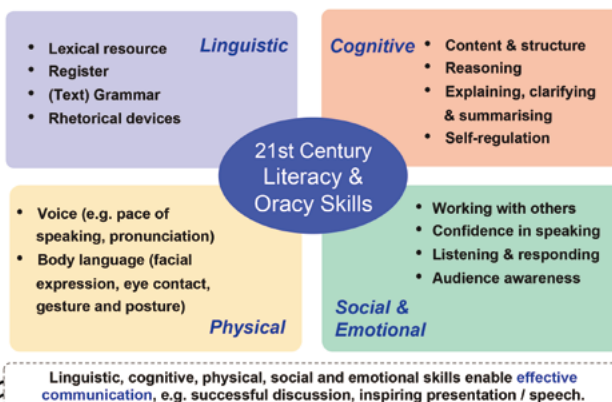
One of the project schools, Hong Kong Teachers Association Lee Heng Kwei Secondary School in Tai Po, has been investigating how to improve their S4 students' oral skills with a focus on the individual presentation required for SBA, and they have been doing this mostly online due to the COVID-19 social distancing restrictions. In fact, the online lessons actually provided the impetus to use the video-recording facilities in apps such as *Flipgrid* and platforms such as *Teams*, which proved to be very practical and useful for the project. The students could record themselves as many times as they liked before submitting their videos so they gained a lot of practice. Their videos could be used for focused feedback, usually positive, and peer monitoring, through which students could appreciate their classmates' skills and measure them against their own. This was quite motivating for the more competitive students.

The ever-present challenge of time was now under better management because students completed the recordings for homework, so teachers could focus on the four domains of the project. The first was the linguistic domain. This is the bread and butter of English teaching, so it was easy to create comprehension questions for the class reader, which was the text for this part of the project. The students could answer these questions through uploading their worksheets as *Google Docs* or answering questions on *Google Forms*.

The next domain was the cognitive. This is where the teachers decided to develop the reading

Read to Speak Skills Development Framework

- Lexical resource
- Register
- (Text) Grammar
- Rhetorical devices

Linguistic

Cognitive
- Content & structure
- Reasoning
- Explaining, clarifying & summarising
- Self-regulation

21st Century Literacy & Oracy Skills

- Voice (e.g. pace of speaking, pronunciation)
- Body language (facial expression, eye contact, gesture and posture)

Physical

- Working with others
- Confidence in speaking
- Listening & responding
- Audience awareness

Social & Emotional

Linguistic, cognitive, physical, social and emotional skills enable effective communication, e.g. successful discussion, inspiring presentation / speech.

comprehension skill of making inferences and marry this to speaking practice. At the end of each chapter, the students were asked to identify how the events in the story related to the theme, and then to record their answers on video. At first they only needed to record a sentence or two, and sentence stems were provided as necessary. As the story went on, it became easier for the students to recognise the events that were relevant to the theme and to elaborate on and extend their ideas.

The physical domain was addressed by the feedback students received from the teacher about their pronunciation, intonation, facial expression and eye contact in the video, which also involved the actual framing of the video to include the full face and not just the forehead! Students could see from viewing one another's videos how all of these physical features of oral language production contributed to a show of confidence.

Finally, the students were asked to record an individual presentation in which they explained how the theme was developed throughout the story. They were asked to mention all the major events and characters' reactions to them in order to build the content of their presentation. They already had the vocabulary, which had been developed through the comprehension questions and the end-of-chapter inference questions, and they also had the experience of recording themselves speaking.

The final results were very pleasing. The teachers were quite impressed with the progress the students made throughout the year. They could see that by structuring regular opportunities for the students to speak and by providing the necessary language in manageable amounts and in a context, students could build up their skills and confidence. It was through these small, scaffolded steps that the students were able to develop their oral proficiency for their individual presentations. Our next challenge in the project is the group discussion.

Julien Hawthorne
Regional NET Coordinator, NET Section