

NET

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<https://nets.edb.hkedcity.net/>

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.

“Hope sees the invisible, feels the intangible, and achieves the impossible.”

Helen Keller

Over the past two years, the COVID-19 pandemic has posed unheard-of challenges in almost every aspect of our lives, including the social emotional well-being of our students. Understandably, some students may experience isolation, frustration or confusion under such unprecedented circumstances. Findings of an international survey¹ on Social and Emotional Skills conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) show that the benefits of developing students’ social and emotional skills could go beyond cognitive development and academic outcomes. To help our students prosper in this fast-changing world, it is important for education professionals and parents to work together to nurture positive values and attitudes in students – elements which hold the keys to young people building resilience against adversity and developing the capacity to adapt, respect and work well with others.

Every cloud has a silver lining. Having a sense of hope and something positive to look forward to always enables us to cope better with challenges in life, and how true this is especially during the COVID-19 period. In the 2021/2022 school year, ‘Hope’ has been chosen as the overarching theme of the ‘Promoting Positive Values and Attitudes through English Sayings of Wisdom’ campaign organised by the English Language Education (ELE) Section and the Native-speaking English Teacher (NET) Section of the Curriculum Development Institute (CDI) of the Education Bureau (EDB) to connect English Language education with values education. The territory-wide and cross-curricular campaign aims to enrich students’ English learning experience through a variety of multimodal resources and to develop their positive values and attitudes through an appreciation of the richness and beauty of English sayings of wisdom, all carefully chosen to illustrate and underpin the selected themes. Schools are encouraged to leverage the platform and organise their own activities to reinforce and embrace the theme of ‘Hope’ and the sub-theme of ‘My Pledge to Act’.

The articles in this issue of the NET Scheme News tell us how our English teachers help build a positive, value-rich educational environment through daily English learning



and teaching. You will read about how teachers create meaningful English learning experiences for students with creative ideas such as micro-messaging, short animations, apps and e-platforms to develop students’ English language skills. Big things start from small beginnings and we all have a positive role to play to help students achieve success both inside and out of the classroom.

Within the NET Section itself, with the concerted efforts of different colleagues, the Section has recently produced a series of storytelling videos to promote reading, family literacy and values education. The videos on ‘The Father, the Son and the Donkey’ and ‘The Hare and the Tortoise’, for instance, are two episodes for Season 3 on Social and Emotional Learning, which were produced to reinforce the development of positive values, attitudes and behaviour. The respective themes of the two episodes are ‘Responsible Decision-making’ and ‘Growth Mindset’, each designed with a focus on selected language features, songs and games. It gives me great pleasure to say that all the storytelling videos are readily available on the NET Section webpage. Feel free to browse, watch and be inspired.

At the beginning of 2022, may I take this opportunity to wish you all the best of health and a happy Year of the Tiger, full of hope and positive energy. Hope is a very powerful force. Let’s pay it forward. We will see the invisible, feel the intangible and achieve the impossible.

Iris Chan
Chief Curriculum Development Officer, NET Section

¹ OECD (2021). *Beyond Academic Learning: First Results from the Survey of Social and Emotional Skills*. OECD Publishing, Paris. <https://doi.org/10.1787/92a11084-en>.

Using Thinking Routines to Enhance Values Education in English Language and Literature Lessons

"Class, why is it important to be self-compassionate?", you ask. "So that we can be compassionate to ourselves!", a student enthusiastically but robotically responds. Yes, we've all been there: the long double lesson spent on a well-prepared lesson that incorporates values education, only to be met with an unconcerned response 2 hours later.

When incorporating values education into English lessons, teachers would hope to see meaningful discussions, students' good understanding of how to practise and apply these values, and connections being made to the students' real lives. We have all experienced the generic responses to prompts about values, such as "Reflection is important because it allows us to reflect on ourselves." Responses such as these hint at students' lack of connection to the topic and an absence of personal relevance.

There is, however, a relatively simple and pain-free solution: Thinking Routines.

As part of the "Seed" Project 'Developing Students' Creativity, Collaboration and Problem Solving Skills through Creating the Makerspace in the Secondary English Language Classroom', Marymount Secondary School (MSS) has been experimenting with Thinking Routines as a strategy to make English learning more relevant, meaningful and complex.

Developed by Harvard's Project Zero team, Thinking Routines are a short series of steps that guide your thought process. They are simple and easy to use and help learners make their thinking visible. When used regularly, students begin to have more open discussions, feel more confident in exploring complex ideas and making connections, and improve their critical thinking skills.

Thinking Routines can be used in any subject and for any topic. In English lessons, Thinking Routines can be used at any stage of an activity. They are great for prompting discussions or brainstorming, extremely effective in helping students draw connections in a text or to the outcomes of a task, and they have proved to elicit meaningful and constructive feedback.

Thinking Routines also help students grapple with different values which can sometimes seem vague or irrelevant to them.

While values are an intrinsic part of our lives, it can be difficult to incorporate them into learning in a way that is authentic. Thinking Routines allow students to explore a topic by analysing their own experiences or their partner's.



S3 students practising the compassionate systems method of ear-to-ear check-ins before getting started on thinking routines



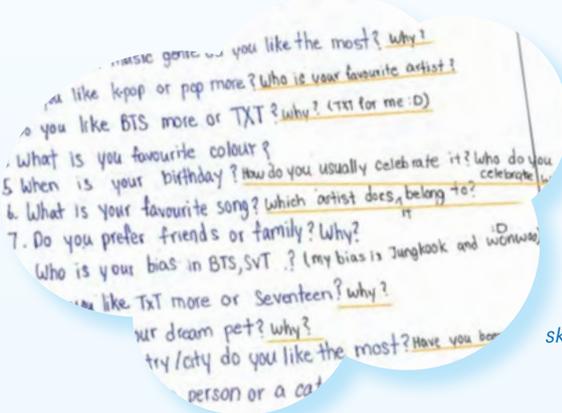
Routines such as 'Think, Feel, Care' and 'Four Corners' help students to practise empathy and compassion by allowing them to draw connections between authentic experiences and different perspectives of values in practice. These Thinking Routines can be used as pre-writing or speaking activities where students construct meaning before demonstrating their understanding through task completion.

Thinking Routines are also effective in helping students explore and understand different perspectives. Routines such as 'Step Inside' and 'I Used to think.... Now I Think' help students to articulate their understanding of new points of view and demonstrate their ability to show respect and care for others. These routines can be used when students are conducting character analysis of a fictional text, or interviewing someone very different from themselves.

S3 students conducting interviews using the 'Step Inside' thinking routine



Many students get frustrated when they can't make sense of something and they don't know where to begin or how to improve. As Thinking Routines help to make thinking more visible, students begin to make greater connections and are able to explore different subjects and topics in more depth. Once students become more familiar with Thinking Routines, they begin to identify ways to incorporate them in their learning, which empowers students to persevere. Thinking Routines provide students with a tool kit with which they can take charge of their learning and tackle challenging concepts.



A sample of S1 student work demonstrating improved inquiry skills after using the 'Question Starts' thinking routine

A sample of S3 student work from their Superhero task, demonstrating empathy, compassion and hope. Students made use of the 'Step Inside' thinking routine.



At MSS, we have found that infusing Thinking Routines into English Language and Literature learning has resulted in far greater student engagement and participation. We incorporate them in all four of the language skills and in a variety of stages of activities to ensure that our students' learning is authentic, meaningful and relevant. We have noticed positive shifts in the complexity of students' reasoning, their improved understanding of the role of values in society, and development of higher order thinking skills and creativity. Considering that you're simply adding a few simple prompts to your usual teaching practice, that's a lot of bang for your buck!

Lauren Minnie, NET, Marymount Secondary School





Adding Value and Values to Our Curriculum Through Caring for Our City and Our Seas

Values and ideals are like lights in the darkness – they are signals giving us direction, meaning and purpose especially as we sail through choppy waters. Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) and charities are often the lighthouse keepers raising our awareness of the problems that our city faces as they help shed light in areas where before there was only darkness.

Many NGOs and charities in Hong Kong have been working hard over the years to instill values, such as empathy, by promoting care for the environment and for those who may not have a voice in our society. Through making positive impact on people, they hope to galvanise them into action to solve problems. During the 2020/21 NET Section Regional and Territory-wide Cluster Meetings, teachers across Hong Kong were introduced to the work that some NGOs are doing that highlight environmental and social problems facing Hong Kong in the 21st century. These NGOs provide opportunities for local students to learn more about work of the NGOs and to take steps proactively to solve different social problems. They also instill good values and promote leadership qualities in our young people.

Four of the leading NGOs in environmental protection provide comprehensive outreach programmes and hands-on activities for local schools. **Plastic Free Seas (PFS)**, **Redress Hong Kong**, **The Hong Kong Shark Foundation** and **Feeding Hong Kong** all made presentations at the Cluster Meetings to a large number of interested teachers. Amongst the many activities that these charities provide to develop students' empathy and other positive values, along with their communication



skills in English, are Beach Clean-Ups, Recycling Days and Bread Runs that raise awareness of pollution, food waste and poverty. PFS demonstrated a STEM related activity in which they used a hairdryer to demonstrate the use of plastics in the most surprising products – in this case shampoo and hair conditioner.

Following our Regional NET and Territory-wide Cluster Meetings, many teachers have reached out to these NGOs to invite them to their schools. Some NGOs have done class activities with students, while others have addressed morning assemblies or arranged life-wide learning activities. Lyndsey Martin, a NET at Yuen Long Merchants Association Secondary School, recently invited Plastic Free Seas to her school. She reflected on this visit at the recent NT (East) Cluster Meeting, saying that the visit encouraged students to reflect on how they can improve the quality of life in both their school and the wider society.

It is believed that such activities also enhance English learning both inside and outside the classroom by making learning more authentic and purposeful.

The EDB encourages schools to integrate environmental elements into the school curricula and long-term development through a whole-school approach. The outreach programmes and curriculum resources developed by **Plastic Free Seas**, **Redress Hong Kong**, **The Hong Kong Shark Foundation** and **Feeding Hong Kong**, and presented to teachers at the Regional and Territory-wide Cluster Meetings, can undoubtedly further these aims.

John Hone, Regional NET Coordinator, NET Section



Promoting Campus-wide Positive Values Through English

How can NETs get involved in values education on their campus? One thing we all love about teaching is seeing the 'light go on' when students 'get' something and we know that we have had an impact on our students' lives, either in terms of learning English or learning some life lesson. But how can we do that with values education on a campus-wide scale? How can we as English teachers help build a positive, value-rich educational environment for students?

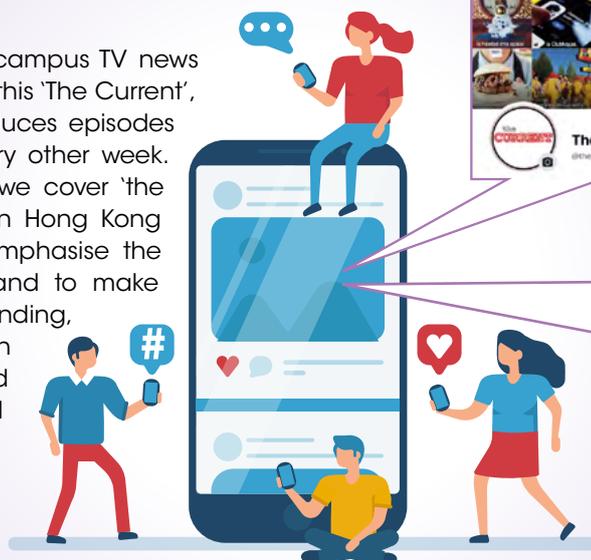
One great way to have a positive impact is to introduce a yearly theme. This can be a slogan like 'Seize the Moment', 'Pay it Forward' or 'Make a Difference'. This is what we do at my school, Jockey Club Ti-I College, where we put up a big banner with the theme of the year at our front entrance and then



line our time tunnel with supporting banners. Teachers also give talks throughout the year sharing personal examples of what they have done related to the theme. This connects students to the theme and helps them build positive relationships with teachers. In addition, we hold special discussions about these topics scheduled into form periods, and even add questions to our examinations, the writing paper in particular, to have students further reflect on the theme. Basically, a yearly school theme has become part of our Ti-I DNA.



Another thing we do is to run a campus TV news programme. At our school, we call this 'The Current', and it is a student club that produces episodes that are shown campus-wide every other week. It is built into our timetable and we cover 'the latest issues, events and culture' in Hong Kong that relate to students' lives. To emphasise the relevance of issues to students and to make positive impact on their understanding, we always include interviews with students, quizzes, activities, and games. In our recently held Squid Game, in an episode about 'risk', students found out what kind of risk-takers they were!



Finally, why limit yourself to bi-weekly episodes shown in the classroom when you can get your content directly into the hands of students for the greatest impact? Start an *Instagram* account and share your videos there! We did this with 'The Current' and now we produce short, 1-minute episodes called Current Minis that we post right when students are leaving campus and picking up their phones to see what is going on. Instant access! During the pandemic when everyone had half-day school and students could not stay after school to film full episodes, our Current Team of student anchors, reporters, script-writers and editors put out THREE Current Mini episodes per week for FIVE weeks in a row on *Instagram* and *YouTube*! Wow! What a way for you as a NET to improve your understanding of local Hong Kong life while having access to positively influencing your students!

And here's the thing! It's not hard! You can film everything on your digital devices... and enhance your audio with something as simple and powerful as a wireless microphone kit for smartphones! Anything is possible!

Want to have a more positive impact on your students? Give any of these ideas a try!

For more information on 'The Current' and Current Minis, visit our school YouTube channel, <https://www.youtube.com/c/JCTICOfficialYoutubeChannel> and view the playlist for 'The Current' or our *Instagram* account at <https://www.instagram.com/thecurrenttic/>.



Scott Linder, NET, Jockey Club Ti-I College



Implementing Values Education Through the Read to Speak (R2S) “Seed” Project

One of the aims of the NET Section’s R2S “Seed” Project at HKTA Lee Heng Kwei Secondary School is to give equal weighting to the cognitive, linguistic, physical, and social and emotional aspects of language. It is the focus on the social and emotional elements that provides opportunities to highlight values education, specifically the theme of Hope.

This year, the project focus is on both the Individual Presentation and the Discussion aspects of School-based Assessment (SBA), in particular, on non-print fiction, i.e. films. Rather than watching a full-length feature film, which can be very time-consuming, the teaching and learning texts will be some very short, silent, animated films. In addressing the EDB focus on Values Education, the project has focused on films that promote hope, along with other positive values.

Hope may be an optimistic state of mind, yet it does not arrive out of thin air. It is important for students to understand that hope can be developed by having goals, working towards achieving them and having the confidence and belief that you can instigate change and achieve these goals. The three chosen animations address these elements of hope in different ways.



The first 3-minute animation, ‘Scarlett’, is about a young girl who has lost a leg (we do not know how) and so she feels sad and excluded. Scarlett’s mother encourages her by giving her a tutu so that Scarlett can imagine herself as a ballerina. This provides the

impetus for Scarlett to set a goal, find a pathway and have the agency to achieve success. She goes on to share her optimism by encouraging a fellow student whom she discovers feeling sad and lonely.

The second 4-minute animation, ‘The Present’, is about a teenage boy who seems intent on staying inside a darkened room and playing computer games when he receives a puppy as a gift from his mother. At first, he rejects the puppy because it is missing a leg. However, the puppy has a goal. She wants the boy to play with her and so sets about engaging the boy’s interest and never gives up until she achieves her goal. The twist comes at the end when we discover that the boy is also missing a leg.



The third film, running at two and a half minutes, ‘Volunteer Your Time’, is about a miserable man who ignores the people around him and fails to help anyone until a little old lady grabs his hand at a pedestrian crossing and forces him to help her cross the road. While doing so, he needs to take action to prevent an accident in which his life is threatened. He realises he does have agency and he can contribute to the welfare of others, which in turn makes him happy and gives him a new mission to make other people’s lives happy by helping them.

While this third animation does not focus specifically on hope, it does show students the positive aspects of instigating change, a prerequisite for hope. The main focus is on helping others, and this aspect is highlighted in the first two films as well.

Students will develop the vocabulary required for their presentations by analysing the animations scene by scene, labeling and describing locations, actions, reactions, emotions, feelings, etc. and making inferences. Teachers will model the presentation first, gradually releasing more responsibility to the students by providing the necessary scaffolding for each step, thereby catering for the diverse learning needs of the students.

Once the students have developed control over the vocabulary required to describe the plots and themes as well as the skills required for the Individual Presentation, they will move onto discussing the theme of Hope in the three films. Our next challenge will be to develop the necessary discussion skills and the language required for expressing such things as opinions, comparisons, contrasts, reasons, relevance and relative importance. Having set learning and teaching objectives, and provided pathways and scaffolding, and given students skills and confidence, we certainly have high hopes for this project!

Julien Hawthorne, Regional NET Coordinator, NET Section



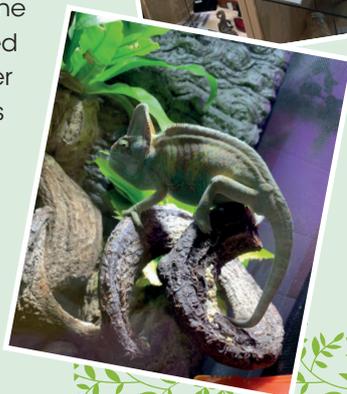
Lions Clubs International Ho Tak Sum Primary School Eco Room

Following the past couple of years of being unable to organise school trips, we decided to convert an old Cultural Room into an Eco Room! This was quite a big task as the room would have to be usable in cross-curricular lessons such as English and General Studies, whilst being an enjoyable space for the students to visit, hang out, and learn about the environment and how to care for it.

The school already has a hydroponics system installed for students to learn about the process of growing and caring for plants and vegetables. Moving this to the Eco Room made a lot of sense. We have also added some animals in the room with the intention of showing the students how to properly care for animals as well as incorporating ecological chains into their learning. For example, we have vivariums containing chameleons. The vegetables grown by the students are eaten by the chameleons, then every few hours the chameleon enclosures are auto-watered using a special mist machine. This washes the chameleons' waste out into a separate cleaner tank below containing a clean-up crew of fish, plants (and soon to be freshwater shrimp) where the waste is taken care of!



Likewise, we have a fish tank with aquaponics built above. The fish live happily and are cared for by the students. The water runs through the aquaponics where the plants can extract the unwanted ammonia and nitrites from the water. We are trying to use as many natural processes as possible, refraining from using chemicals unless necessary.



We are also using the Eco Room to teach the students about endangered wildlife and illegal animal trading and goods. A few years ago, the school was given some illegal animal trade items to show physical examples of what not to purchase. These have now been given a secure display in the Eco Room. We hope the students will understand that these items involve the killing of animals similar in some ways to the ones they are caring for across the room.



We want the students to get involved with the Eco Room as much as possible. We have students as 'Eco Monitors' who help look after the room, and prefects ensure everyone is being respectful towards the plants and animals. I think it is important that the room acts as a bridge for those students who do not have animals at home, giving them the chance to learn about the responsibility of caring for animals. At the same time, the students understand that some animals cannot be kept as pets! A good example of this in Hong Kong is with turtles (terrapins). We have been gifted a turtle, which has been placed in the Eco Room. We will give it an incredible home, but I will ensure that the students get to see just how much is involved in caring for them as pets, in the hope that they will never buy turtles themselves.



We have decorated the room to make it a bit more 'nature-like', adding fake stones to the walls and vines to the ceiling to give a feel of being away from the school altogether when you enter. There is even jungle music playing to add to the sensory experience! We hope as the room progresses, we will be able to show the students some amazing things about the environment and ecology. By adding a new level of responsibility for our students, we hope they can understand that learning is much more than just doing homework and studying for examinations.

**Jack Weetman, NET, Lions Clubs International
Ho Tak Sum Primary School**



Filmit 2021 Awards Ceremony Business as Unusual: Celebrating Diversity Amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic

The Filmit competition awards ceremony returned on 7 July 2021 after a one-year absence. On this special occasion, 130+ students and teachers came together to celebrate their digital filmmaking achievements and experience the joy of diversity. The afternoon of punched up visual delights was also attended by Ambassador Thomas Gnocchi, Head of European Union Office (EUO) to Hong Kong and Macao and Dr Gloria Chan, Principal Assistant Secretary, Curriculum Development Institute of EDB.

Colour was used throughout the ceremony as a powerful symbol of diversity and inclusivity: the

colourful poster entries that outfitted the school hall and the spectacle of colour that excited the audience throughout the ceremony.

While we were visibly reminded of the COVID-19 pandemic by the social distancing measures and our face-masked audience, these reminders did not dampen a single spirit. The school hall of LST Yu Kan Hing Secondary School welcomed a cautious audience. Initially, their reservations soon evaporated when they came face-to-face with the vibrantly designed Eazystand posters.

Excitement, disbelief and laughter ensued.





As custom dictated, the afternoon opened with a montage of the best moments from some of our nominated entries and speeches from Ambassador Gnocchi and Ms Iris Chan, Head of the NET Section.

The highlights of the afternoon were far too many to mention: four confident young ladies from Tak Oi Secondary School emceed the ceremony, owning the stage with their strong presence; a world map of finger prints, which was presented to the EUO to Hong Kong and Macao as a gesture of our gratitude for their sponsorship; and the much enjoyed audience participation during the announcement of the Popular Vote Award winner.



Let's not forget the diversity-themed short films that defy expectations. There were the usual suspects: acceptance and respect as prevailing themes in most of the entries.

There were also entries that showed how the required social distance pushed our students in a new direction. We had entries that were made partly or entirely using Zoom. We also had entries in which students were filmed separately and, thanks to the magic of creative editing, they appeared to be in the same scene at the same time!

Collectively, the entries coalesced to create an interesting mix: a music video entry overflowing with cuteness and positive energy rubbing shoulder with a Zoom-tastic entry that captured the mood of the distant-yet-not-so-distant online comradery pretty accurately. A Gordon Ramsay 'tribute', the rivalry among the tricolor Gods and a documentary about the culinary choice made by three expatriates could easily form a trilogy about food.



If this awards ceremony is to be remembered for our students' star power, we get more than our fair share of their blinding performance – as themselves and as the creative minds behind the winning and nominated entries – in this blinder of a ceremony, COVID or not, we will see you again in July 2022 and that's down to the POWER OF HOPE!

William Cheng, Senior Curriculum Development Officer, NET Section

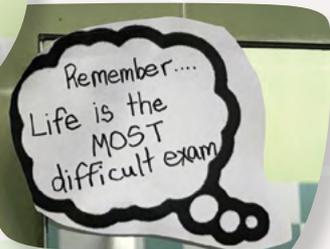
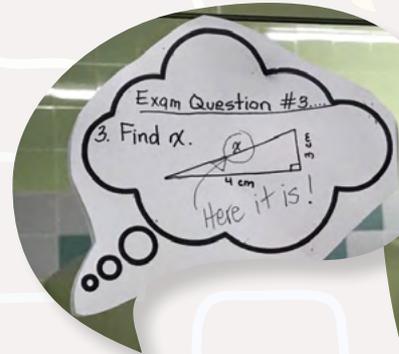
Three of the distinguished guests gracing the Awards Ceremony (from left): Ms Iris Chan, Dr Gloria Chan and Ambassador Thomas Gnocchi



Micro-messaging: Playful Learning in Unexpected Places

Students enter our classrooms and bring with them a wide variety of hopes, dreams, passions, strengths, troubles, fears and history. It is our job to embrace all these and find creative ways to encourage each and every student to make the best use of their experiences and thrive in learning. As a NET, I embrace, and am open to the revelations that are born when thinking creatively. My most recent revelation is that “small teaching” has the potential to make a BIG difference, especially when we harness non-traditional learning environments. That’s because how we learn doesn’t discriminate where we learn. It also helps to have a sense of humour. Let me explain...

During examination period, micro-messaging in the bathroom can provide a moment of unexpected laughter and help reduce anxiety, provide a sense of safety and improve student mood.



Humorous micro-messaging in unexpected places can disarm tension and strengthen relationships.

When we imagine our students learning here in Hong Kong, many of us see classrooms filled with rows of chairs and students hovering over piles of books and worksheets. Throughout the school, there is an abundance of posters, inspirational quotes, bulletin boards, shelves of novels and much more; truly a phenomenal language-rich environment. Still, we cannot engineer and pre-package all of our student learnings, but perhaps we can quietly surprise them and remind them to be open to the unexpected and be ever watchful for these chance encounters in school and ultimately in life. That is why I have decided to micro-message students in playful spaces.



Micro-messages are received and interpreted in the moment by the viewer and can be quietly transformative.

In this context, micro-messaging refers to small inconspicuous written messages that are positioned anywhere in the school including unassuming and unexpected places. These messages can call for action on the part of the reader or just provide an introspective moment. These micro-messages are ephemeral and random; unplanned fortunate discoveries by students who just happen to “notice” them. I have always believed in the magic of serendipity. Happy accidents or small chance encounters have the power to inspire a chain of events that can lightly or strongly shift someone’s life course, exposing them to unexpected opportunities. To be sure, I am fatally optimistic here because often I place these messages on doorknobs, backs of chairs, in halls and stairwells and, my favourite location, school bathrooms. Granted, these locations are not the bastions of learning one might imagine, which is why their incongruity makes them a hit with the students. By reframing traditional spaces for learning in creative ways, I also create a sense of belonging and an abundance of conversation.

Each micro-message creates its own small learning community, a student's private learning environment that allows them to exist in the moment. The social serendipity of micro-messaging has the power to capture that moment, or it can trigger a response to a prior problem, question or concern originally raised by any teacher or social encounter. Alternatively, the student could just keep walking and not see the message. Such is the nature of teaching.

In October 2021, I had the pleasure of delivering a workshop at the Regional Cluster Meeting organised by the NET Section and shared with teachers various ways to incorporate micro-messaging into their school. We focused initially on typical examples of language outside of the classroom and ways to insert messages into these spaces to save students from becoming visually saturated with language. The key to micro-messaging is to think small and move often. The reasoning? Students are conditioned to engage with their environment and to expect certain experiences, rituals and routines. When nothing much changes, students begin to fill in most of their environment from memory. To challenge this, I encouraged teachers to find new and unexpected ways for students to engage with language. This keeps them visually curious. The teachers then ventured into the world of visual literacy and created beautiful 'micro-mandalas' in the spirit of French artist Sonia Delaunay. Delaunay's work is well suited to the English language classroom. It is visually interesting and students feel confident making circles. It requires minimum preparation and there is a language component. The final product, titled 'Grace and Gratitude,' was a collaborative effort by all teachers present that day, and will be gifted to the NET Section as a "small" token of our appreciation.

The many forms of micro-messaging are really all about cultivating a creative ecology with our students. These small encounters are most certainly part of a larger system but, as is often the case, all big things come from small beginnings. Serendipity events can be transformative. Opportunities and spaces to learn are everywhere and can be the source of incredible power. Sometimes life's most valuable lessons come as just a soft whisper.

**Mary Beth Osburn, NET,
Fukien Secondary School
(Siu Sai Wan)**



Mary Beth, a former Visual Arts curriculum writer with the Nova Scotia Department of Education, Canada.



Micro-messaging can involve action-oriented tasks. In this moving display, each message contains a social challenge and instruction.



'Grace and Gratitude' 2021, water-soluble wax crayon on paper and gilding, a collaborative effort by NETs at the workshop.



Teachers using visual literacy to create a micro-mandala in the style of French artist Sonia Delaunay, using water-soluble wax crayon and gold-leaf gilding

Cultivating a Culture of Hopeful Storytelling

One may ask, "How do stories bring us hope?". Hope is an elusive concept. Aristotle once said, "Hope is the waking dream." Aristotle's idea of the waking dream resonates with Professor Richard Miller, an expert on hope at the Arizona State University. To Miller, hope can be taught as it is a skill that can be nurtured in ourselves and in our children. He claims we can do this through recalling past happenings that help us understand what works and what does not as we plan for the future. This is what stories do.

Sharing stories can inspire hope. This is evident in the English Storytelling for Children Programme, a collaborative project between the NET Section and the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD). Its main objective is to provide opportunities for NETs to bring their creative arts to the wider community as a volunteer service. It is not surprising that this service of sharing stories has been powerful in supporting the emotional well-being of our young people, especially during this challenging time of COVID-19.

The programme has been up and running since 2015/16. It has brought much fun and enjoyment to our children including those from ethnic minorities. These storytelling sessions held in the Hong Kong Public Libraries are very popular, and have played an important role in inspiring hope amongst our progenies.

Research from The Family Narratives Lab at Emory University has also highlighted the power of stories. The stories of hope that we pass down to our children help them cultivate a sense of meaning and purpose in life. Through telling hope-filled stories of oneself, one's family and one's history, we help to nurture hope as children identify themselves with the hopeful experiences of the people and heroes in the stories. Children can be nurtured with the hope that the future will bring better things.

Jordan Booker and Julie Dunsmore's study (2021) also supports the findings that telling stories that are hopeful and involve characters who use their individual power to control goals, action and destiny is good for us. Their research confirms that students who show higher levels of hope tell stories about their future challenges that are more agentic. They become agents of change in their own lives. They become more confident, more resilient and more positive in their self-esteem. Storytelling can help children and young adults to reduce stress, increase happiness and improve academic achievement.

Our storytellers share the same belief through their proactive support in telling hopeful stories to the children in Hong Kong. Below are some of their comments on their storytelling experiences:

"I see the English Storytelling Programme as a positive on a variety of levels. It's a chance to give back. It's community participation. It's immediate feedback. The hope and joy that reading brings is evident in the anticipation and participation of the children, and as Hong Kong and the world try to bounce back into shape after the pandemic interruptions of the last couple of years, that sense of hope will be more important than ever." – **Terrence Whelan, The Salvation Army William Booth Secondary School**

"I thoroughly enjoy doing the storytelling sessions in the libraries because the children have a great time. Before the pandemic, the sessions were well-attended, which gave me hope to see that parents understood the importance of developing the love of reading. Although only five children



could attend each of my sessions in 2021 due to COVID-19, the sessions were well-received and the same children came back to my second session at the same library. I couldn't have felt more hopeful about these budding readers. I hope that by attending these library sessions, they will come to love reading as much as I do." – **Andrea McCarvill, Hong Kong Tang King Po College**

"Everyone has a story to tell – big or small. This is my story about hope. I moved to Hong Kong about twelve years ago with the hope of becoming a teacher. I thought I could find a teaching position, but in vain simply because I did not have a teacher certificate. I had to overcome a few obstacles, including waiting for 2 years for university admission into the PGDE course, convincing the Principal to support my university application, etc. Still, I was hopeful.

From my experiences, I often find hope as a driving force as it binds perseverance, positivity, optimism, determination and goals together and helps people succeed.



As a man of hope, I love storytelling for school children so that I can help them learn English as a second language and integrate better into a multicultural society like ours. As a teacher of English as a second language, I serve myself as a model to the Hong Kong children and tell them wonderful stories in English about human values such as friendship, love, kindness, hard work, honesty, hope, etc. which are so important to better prepare them for tomorrow's world. Storytelling kindles amongst children a love of learning through various interactive activities like reading aloud, role-play, arts and crafts, songs, conversations, games, retelling, remaking and creating their own stories. Storytelling provides them opportunities to interact and collaborate with children of multi-ethnic backgrounds and this helps them understand one another better. Storytelling is truly a secret passage to hope." – **Lok Prasad Dahal, SAHK Ko Fook Iu Memorial School**

"Storytelling is a great opportunity to engage children through that magical storytelling moment to help them know more about their strengths and weaknesses. As a storyteller, I enjoy adding my own personal touch of imagination and creativity in inspiring and igniting students' love of reading." – **Elizabeth Kong, The Salvation Army Centaline Charity Fund School**



"Being a volunteer storyteller at the Hong Kong public libraries has been a really enriching experience. Seeing the happy, excited faces of the participants as they see story books in a new light is really rewarding! It's important to give back to the society and these sessions provide a much-appreciated opportunity for service. These library sessions really serve to build a bridge for me to connect with the greater community. I have been a volunteer storyteller at the public library for a number of years now, and I keep coming back because of the positive energy that is co-created by everybody bringing storybooks to life!" – **Darci Kennedy, Jordan Valley St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School**

With hope, we can all turn our lives into beautiful, inspiring stories.

Catherine Lam,
Regional NET Coordinator, NET Section

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Camera, Lights, Action, Values - Play A Part

It has certainly been a busy term for the Drama Club at HKTA Wun Tsueng Ng Lai Wo Memorial School. Six weeks into the first term and their first outstanding drama performance of the year was already entertaining students on and off campus. Students, parents and teachers who were not able to be on campus could enjoy the performance through a live feed. The teacher in charge of the Drama Club, Mr Kiat Au Yeung, explains the journey of settling into a new, blended way of conducting the Drama Club with a focus on creativity and continuing to inspire our students and colleagues to stay motivated so that everyone has something to celebrate during and after this time of social distancing and blended learning.

Mr Kiat said, "As drama teachers, we teach students about being resourceful, empathetic, creative, practical, resilient, and being critical thinkers and problem-solvers. We help them set goals and action them. Values Education plays a big part in the process, from framing story concept to directing show time. Drama performance and festivals in Hong Kong are almost synonymous. Throughout my 18 years of running the school Drama Club, one of the highlights for students, parents and teachers must be English Halloween Festival Day. We often use this opportunity to carefully choose a short story that embeds values to provide



a moral compass for the students to gain insight into values through a character's personality traits.

HKTA Wun Tsuen Ng Lai Wo Memorial School has been focusing on politeness as part of its programme to develop students' self-awareness and positive values. We also consider students' interests and competencies. Throughout the Drama Club sessions, students have the opportunity to express their interest, such as the games Minecraft and Among Us, as well as their ideas and opinions about ways to change or innovate a story.



Both Kayleigh, Narrator 2, class 5A (right) and Candy, class 6C (left) offered suggestions for an alternative ending to the original script. Candy, who played Mum and Winnie the Witch, actually typed a few lines herself for the ending before sending them to me.

Candy said something along the lines of, 'I think we can change the ending so that Herobrine doesn't die. Maybe he turns into a normal human being and says sorry to everyone.'



Two Among Us crewmates - Hayley, class 4A (in red) and Grace, class 5A (in black) started off being very quiet in September. Peggy, class 4A (in orange) was actually a little more confident albeit with limited vocabulary. 'Mr Kiat, I am Grace. I enjoyed performing the Halloween Show very much. I also enjoyed acting as Crewmate 1.' Grace, class 5A

Versatility is the key to progress! Under the current regulations and half-day timetable, we need to consider online learning options. Initial drama club sessions were conducted on Zoom. We focused on understanding the story steps, moods linking key ideas, and dialogue vocabulary that illustrates values and character traits. Each session focused on one scene. We also discussed voice modulation and projection. Interestingly, students' vocal confidence and projections were higher at home than in face-to-face classroom sessions. The students were mostly new to the Drama Club and so the lessons focused more on games and activities that nurture students' goals and are differentiated according to their strengths. By using a strength-based approach, I focused my instructional design on modelling the values that I encourage in my students."

Celebrating our journey!

The teachers, parents and students were impressed with the performance. The students' confidence, stage movement, clear delivery of their lines with correct emotions were all impressive. It was noted both back stage and on stage how well the students listened to each other's lines and worked together, showing respect and support for each other. A happy and joyful memory for all of the children.



"We think that the inclusion of drama in our annual Halloween Day activities offer huge benefits for both the actors on stage as well as the audience members, in terms of the students' speaking and listening skills and their understanding of values," says Ms Rebecca Leung, the school's EPC.

"For the actors, drama provides authentic learning experiences which make learning a second language much more fun and engaging. By using carefully crafted scripts and an array of enticing props, teachers motivated students to explore moral issues, use their imagination and express themselves confidently," says Ms Yvette Mao, the school's drama teacher.

"The process is just as important as the product. Committing lines to memory, coming together to rehearse scenes regularly and dealing with performance anxiety all contribute to students learning about the values of resilience, cooperation, courage and commitment," says Mr Kiat Au Yeung, the school's NET.

Sue Bowden, Advisory Teacher, NET Section



Ken, class 5B (in green) showed the most remarkable improvement over the six weeks in terms of his confidence, which really helped him to project his voice on stage.



This young man, Alfred, class 4C almost reached the point of giving up. He persevered despite the challenges that faced him and on the day of the performance, he pulled off a terrific performance that exceeded all the teachers' expectations.

Football Club Application

Every English teacher knows that it is highly important to locate communication opportunities in an authentic context. When designing oral communication tasks, the teacher should always make sure the context is fun and inherently motivating, and the learning objectives clear and tangible. Ideally, the task should also be relevant and encourage positive values such as perseverance, commitment and care for others. It goes without saying that designing authentic oral communication tasks can be a bewildering balancing act.

At Man Kiu College, the English panel has developed a range of activities and clubs which allow students to express themselves in English whilst exploring a new hobby. One example of this is the 'Man Kiu English Football Club'.

The project consists of 90-minute lessons split equally between the classroom and the football pitch. The students will first have a 45-minute session in the classroom where they will receive language input, reflect on their learning, and participate in creative tasks. For the second 45 minutes, they will go down to the pitch and practise their English language whilst completing fun, collaborative, team-based tasks which utilise their football skills.

In the classroom, the aim is to equip the students with the language they need to complete tasks while on the pitch and to reflect on their current strengths, thus improving confidence, perseverance, and commitment to improving themselves.

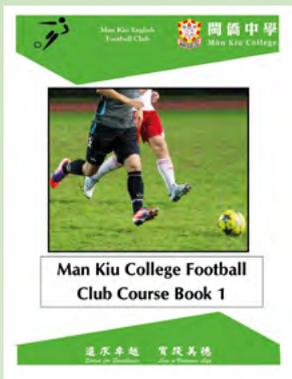
In lesson 2, for example, students learn about different footballing verbs and then decide which ones they think they are good at. Later, they test out these predictions on the pitch. This leads to lesson 3 where they reflect on their initial evaluations of their abilities and develop a training plan for themselves. In lesson 4, the students are taught about different positions when playing football and the requirements for each position. Then, from their reflections, they must decide as a team which students are best suited to each position. This negotiation allows each student to reflect not only individually, but also to develop empathy for other students' views of themselves.



Man Kiu English
Football Club
Application Form

Man Kiu College





In lesson 5, students are required to critically engage in different ways of responding to a teammate's mistake. They must then decide how their actions on the pitch affect the morale of the team, and what ways are appropriate to talk to others.

Throughout the classroom lessons, there is also a strong focus on celebrating the achievement of Hong Kongers in football, both in Hong Kong and in the Mainland. For example, one lesson focuses on the

success of Chan Yuen Ting, the first female manager to take charge of a club in the Men's Asian Champions' League, who has since gone on to manage the China U-17s Women's Football Team.

On the pitch, students are taught the rudiments of football such as passing, tackling and marking. They are also taught the importance of teamwork and commitment.

As a brief description, the course has three main components:

- **Language Skills:** Functional language and football language are provided within the lessons.
- **Core Skills:** The project requires students to apply critical thinking skills to both social and practical situations and to find solutions. It also requires communication and collaboration among the students whilst drawing on their creativity for the designing of celebrations activities, football stickers, and club badges.
- **Values:** Possibly the most rewarding part of this project is how much students appear to have developed the values of perseverance and commitment. Students also developed confident communication strategies and even began to self-monitor defeatism within their groups.

So far, we have piloted the programme with our S2 students. The results have been very positive with good feedback from students and requests from other forms to join the project. We are now going to make the course and the club a permanent feature of our extra-curricular offer.

In the future, we hope to roll out the project to allow other students in our school to participate. We are very passionate about the project and hope to collaborate with primary schools to allow younger students to learn English through playing football. If you are a primary NET and you are interested in collaborating on the project, be it at Man Kiu College, or at your own school, then please reach out to us on the QR codes on the opposite page!

**James Fidgett, NET, and
Vanessa Lai, EPC, Man Kiu College**



Positive Psychology in Values Education

One of my many ambitions as a teacher is to be a passionate and caring facilitator, devoted to embracing diversity. Seeing and understanding the best in all students is a professional passion and an integral component of my teaching philosophy. Having worked closely with a range of students that experience learning difficulties and mental health challenges, I have been exploring how Positive Psychology can impact students' physical and emotional well-being, and in turn, contribute to their achieving success in and out of the classroom.

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented students with a range of challenges and sudden changes, often affecting their mental health and well-being. This may result in them losing faith and motivation, thus greatly impacting their school life. In exploring and studying ways to encourage my students to see the best in all situations, no matter what they are experiencing in their lives, I discovered the PERMA Model (**P**ositive **E**motion, **E**ngagement, **R**elationships, **M**eaning, and **A**ccomplishments), a model for happiness and well-being designed by American Psychologist, Martin Seligman. I've since made it my goal to adopt and integrate this theory into my teaching practice.

My previous school was situated in a low socio-economic area, with many students coming from poorer families and struggling with academics. I had been teaching oral English to an extremely weak S6 class and, for many, the stigma of being in the weakest academic class had already affected their motivation and self-esteem. When the pandemic hit, I witnessed their motivation plummet and, therefore, getting students to participate in my classes was a challenge.

So, I took the opportunity to integrate positive psychology concepts into my lesson plans. For example, in a speaking and writing lesson about the meanings behind both English and Chinese proverbs, students chose one proverb related to their own lives and experiences to write about. Having the opportunity to understand the proverbs on a more personal level provided them with the opportunity to reflect on and share their experiences, and to learn and grow from them. Their reflections also helped me understand and relate to my students on a more personal level.

In order to promote positivity within school, I initiated an English Panel 'Words of Wisdom' project, in which teachers chose a positive motivational word that was meaningful to them. The **PERMA** Model focuses for this project were '**M**eaning' and '**A**ccomplishment', providing an opportunity to reflect on what drives a person to accomplish personal, academic and professional goals. Each English teacher wrote a short personal paragraph about their word

and with the help of the IT Design Department, a colourful poster accompanied by an image of the teacher was designed and displayed in school.

In another cross-curricular project, I worked with the Art and P.E. departments to create 'A Portrait of an Athlete'. For this project, students and alumni chose an athlete that they viewed as a role model and created a portrait of them using an art medium of their choice. There was a strong emphasis on developing the '**P**ositive emotions', '**E**ngagement' and '**A**ccomplishment' of the **PERMA** Model, which gave participants the opportunity to inspire and motivate others through their work. Students gained a great sense of accomplishment when seeing their work displayed on the walls facing the school playground.

Having recently moved to a new school, I'm taking on fresh new challenges. One of my roles at the school entails working with the English Association. Many of the students within the Association wish to improve their writing and public speaking skills, which is why I decided to provide members with a platform to practise these skills through sharing sessions during school assemblies. These sessions focused on the 24 Character Strengths, by Martin Seligman (2004). They teach us that by understanding and maximising on these strengths within ourselves, we can lead a more fulfilling life. The aim of implementing these strengths was not only to provide students with a space to practise their public speaking skills, but also to encourage students to think about how they can inspire and motivate other students through sharing their speeches.

In pursuing these projects, I have learnt that positive psychology can play an integral role in enhancing our cognitive, emotional, and behavioural awareness. I have observed that by applying the **PERMA** Model and positive education to my work, my students have become less self-absorbed and more self-aware, and are able to better relate to the people around them. I hope that these experiences can inspire others to explore the benefits of positive psychology in education.

**Lyndsey Martin, NET,
Yuen Long Merchants
Association Secondary
School**



Add Classcraft!

Dazzling stickers, raffle tickets, the original Haribo Golden Gummy Bears. We've all dangled them in front of students. Motivating students in any given English class can be a challenge. However, challenges have 'value', and, in the spirit of values education, every cloud has a silver lining. Your silver lining could be an online classroom management platform called *Classcraft*.

According to the website, '*Classcraft* lets you create mighty heroes to battle monsters, solve puzzles and reap rewards.' Apologies. I misquoted. That's the introduction to the *Dungeons and Dragons* website. However, fantastically, that's not far off. *Classcraft* works in two ways. Students create mighty heroes, solve puzzles and reap rewards much like 'D and D'. Teachers create meaningful learning experiences, solve motivational problems and reap student enthusiasm as a reward. To gain a better understanding of how this is achieved, do go forth and read deeply into the well-presented explanations provided on their website: www.classcraft.com.

I have found the exercise of setting up my class page easy and introducing it to the students enjoyable. The initial learning curve isn't very steep, and the user interface is pleasant. Currently, I've used *Classcraft* to (a) set classroom learning and behaviour goals with my students collaboratively, (b) manage my class's day-to-day operations smoothly (the class tools are awesome), (c) provide students with a way to receive recognition of their effort in a manner that interests them, and (d) have a ton of fun with my students. The look on their faces when the class opens with a track by Anamanaguchi is priceless. Don't worry. If a student hadn't used a crystal for the power to play an English song in class, I would not have known who they were either.

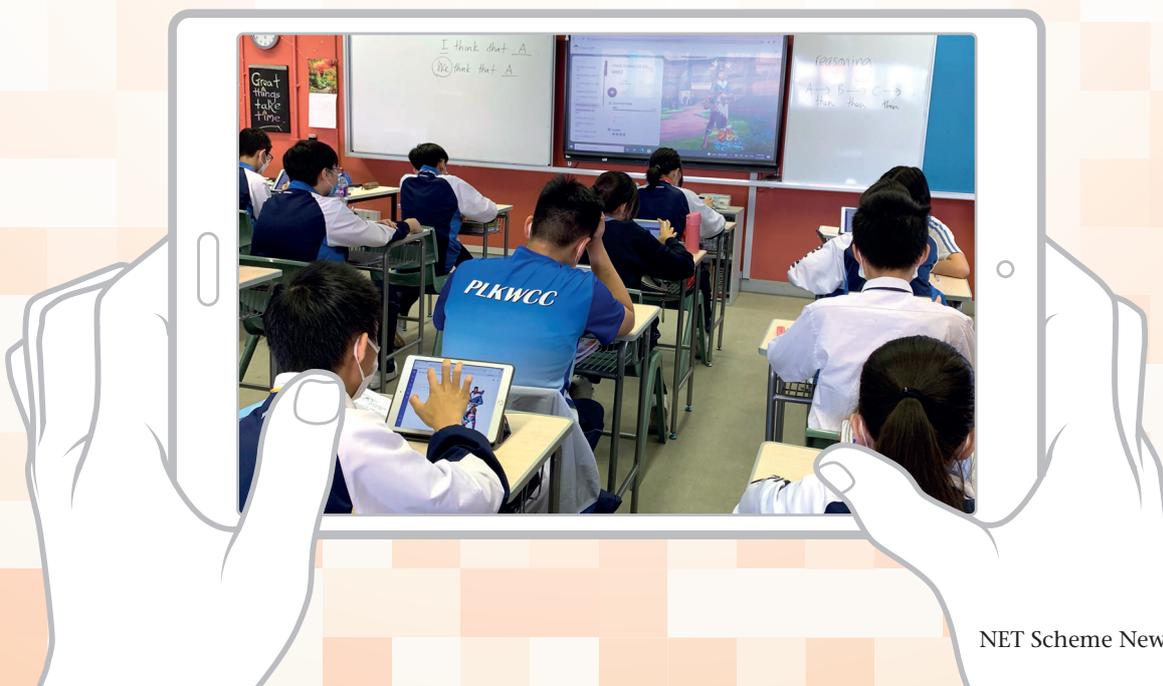
If you wish to go deeper and blend the curriculum into all that *Classcraft* has to offer, that will take a little more time and effort. However, given how positively my Secondary 3 students are reacting, it does seem worth it. Off the bat, it's evident how interacting with *Classcraft* is providing these young learners with authentic English usage experiences, both in a non-fiction and fiction context.

It would be wonderful if we could create a community of *Classcraft* educators in Hong Kong who could share their practice and ideas. It would make the experience much more enjoyable for both new and experienced English teachers alike. In the spirit of that endeavor, a *Google Classroom* page has been set up in the hope of facilitating collaboration. At this resource hub, you can share different elements of the *Classcraft* experience that have (or have not) worked for you. The *Google Classroom* code is `dwg5phb` and it is open to both primary and secondary teachers.

To sum up, even if you don't know the difference between a Wolfen Gear Set and a Manticore Gear Set, or you still think of cheese when you hear the word mouse, *Classcraft* can work for you and your students. When it comes to motivation and classroom behaviour management, put the carrots back in the fridge and leave the sticks for the egrets to nest with. *Classcraft* will help you weather the storm of any troublesome class.

Finally, please note that at the time of writing this, like many other online education service providers such as *Flocabulary* or *Kahoot*, *Classcraft* has both a free version and a paid version. Neither myself nor people I am professionally associated with or personally related to, gain profit from *Classcraft*.

Daniel Harvey, NET, Po Leung Kuk Wu Chung College



Positive Values Education at The EdUHK Jockey Club Primary School

At The Education University of Hong Kong Jockey Club Primary School (JCPS) in Tai Po, developing life education and cultivating students' moral values is one of the school's major concerns. Every Wednesday at JCPS is 'English Wednesday'. During morning assemblies on English Wednesdays, the NETs introduce something called 24 Character Strengths, focusing on a different character strength each week (see table below). The idea comes from the work of Dr Christopher Peterson and Dr Martin Seligman, who believe that 24 character

strengths exist in every individual. Making students aware that we all have different degrees of strengths provides the foundation for genuine self-confidence. At the same time, it helps students better understand and appreciate their differences. Class teachers have been showing the videos prepared by the school's 'NETs' and have led discussions about the positive values covered in the videos. English posters of kind words and wise sayings also help create a positive learning environment.



24 Character Strengths & Positive Values

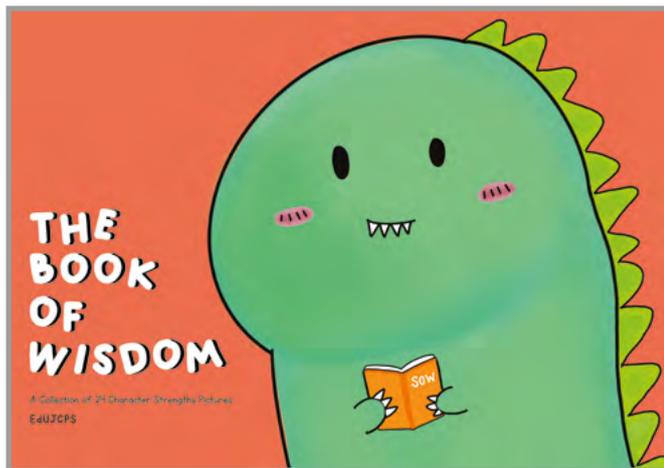


Students at JCPS joined the Sayings of Wisdom – SOW Picture Book Design Competition in the 2020/21 school year and worked collaboratively to create an e-book called 'The Book of Wisdom'. It is a collection of 13 pictures illustrating the four virtues (as classified by Dr Peterson and Dr Seligman) among the 24 character

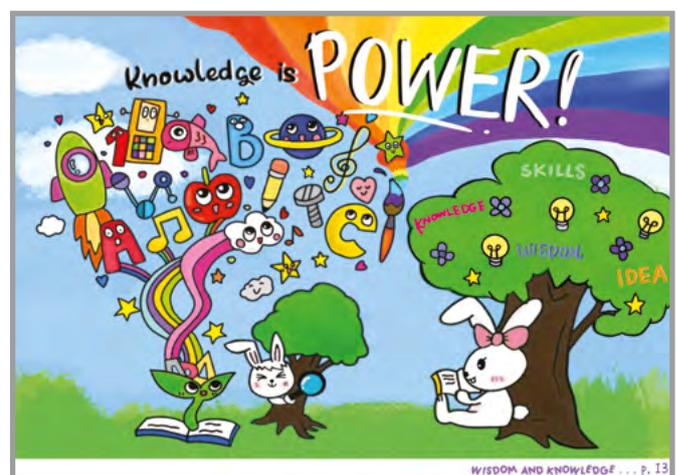
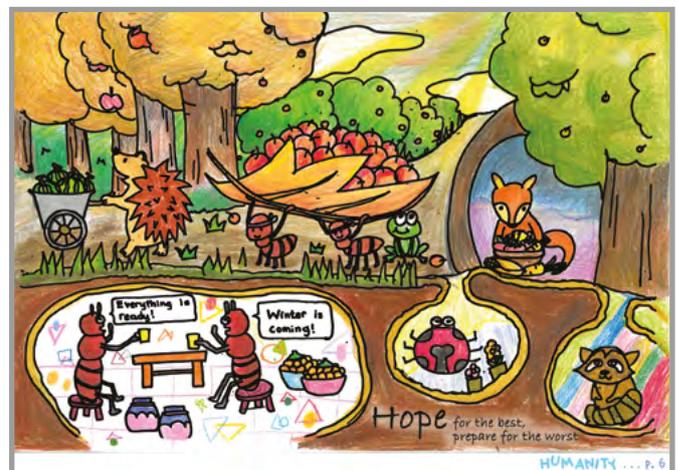
strengths, namely: courage, humanity, temperance, and wisdom and knowledge. It has been an enriching experience for our students!

Sandy Choy, EPC and Gavin Jugg, NET, The EdUHK Jockey Club Primary School

The cover and contents page of the e-book



Students' original drawings illustrating various idioms





Our Makerspace “Seed” Project at 21CLHK

Lok Sin Tong Yu Kan Hing Secondary School and Shun Tak Fraternal Association Seward Woo College are two schools involved in the NET Section “Seed” Project, ‘Developing Students’ Creativity, Collaboration and Problem Solving Skills through Creating a Makerspace in the Secondary English Language Classroom’. These schools have been promoting a maker mindset in their students. Anita Ma is the project coordinator at Lok Sin Tong Yu Kan Hing Secondary School and a seconded teacher at the NET Section. Anita and I have been working for three years together on this project.

This December, at the 21st Century Learning Hong Kong Conference, we presented a paper called ‘Can makerspace and design thinking help English language learning in local Hong Kong schools?’ It focused on the experiences and challenges of teachers and students in applying Makerspace and Design Thinking to English language learning at the junior secondary level at the two local secondary schools in Hong Kong mentioned above.

Richard Cowler,
Regional NET Coordinator

Anita Yi Ma, Vice-Panel Chair,
LST Yu Kan Hing Secondary School

Can makerspace and design thinking help English language learning in local Hong Kong schools?




In our presentation, we related how the teachers we worked with perceived the need to better engage students in more authentic English language learning experiences, with meaningful tasks connected to their lives that demanded creative thinking and expression in English. We showed how Makerspace and Design Thinking had enriched students’ language learning and coached 21st century learning skills through the cultivation of a Maker mindset that focused on solving problems and innovation. We gave two examples of how this had been successfully delivered: one in which students created marketing materials and an app for their own start-up company, and another in which students designed and prototyped a board game to help their peers learn English.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the whole conference was online. As conference attendees, the most influential paper was delivered by Professor Guy Claxton, called ‘21st Century Teaching: How To Do It’. In it, Professor Claxton reminds us of Edward de Bono’s suggestion: to be ‘water thinkers’ not ‘rock thinkers’. This means we should not be fixating on the ‘rocks’ (or obstacles) that are in our way, but thinking like water and finding a way to flow as water does down a rocky river bed. This does not mean that we need to ignore the reality of, for example, tests and examinations for which we have a responsibility to prepare students. What we should look for are the opportunities in and around these requirements where we can coach students in 21st century learning skills. This idea was very encouraging for the project that we were presenting, which definitely had to flow around more than a few obstacles!



We were happy to have the opportunity to show how the NET Scheme is able to enrich students’ learning with authentic experiences in English, harness the power of collaboration between NETs and local teachers, and introduce innovative pedagogy. I hope our presentation will encourage more teachers to be water thinkers and to look for new ways to coach our students in 21st century learning skills.

Richard Cowler,
Regional NET Coordinator, NET Section

