NET

SCHEME NEWS

Maximising Potential

Exploration

Inclusiveness

Collaboration

Innovation

Well-being

THE POWER OF A VIBRANT COMMUNITY OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATORS

The Power of a Vibrant Community of International Educators

"There is no power of change greater than a community discovering what it cares about." – Margaret J. Wheatley

"Fostering Learning Communities Among International Educators" is the tagline under THE NET SCHEME IN HONG KONG on the Scheme's e-platform. It represents a vision for how to sustain and rejuvenate the Scheme as a key measure to support English language education in local schools. Few may know that the creation of this tagline was inspired by a discussion about the Scheme's development with the evaluation team led by Professor Mary Shepard Wong a couple of years ago. During the discussion, we celebrated the achievements made with the effective use of the different avenues created for students to learn and shine, such as the literacy programmes implemented and the range of competitions held. We also made the same observation that it was the synergy built within the community of professionals under the NET Scheme that had been empowering us to promote innovation and to awaken possibilities. The professional community referred to comprises not only our NETs, but also our local English teachers, staff of the NET Section and professional partners from different fields. Working towards shared goals, we support and inspire each other with our aspirations and the range of experiences and expertise we bring to the Scheme. Irrespective of where we are from, whatever our ethnic or cultural background is, we contribute to the community as international educators.

In this issue of the NET Scheme News, we have a collection of articles on different topics of interest and importance. These include the use of technology in education, new literacies, professional collaboration, creation of an engaging learning environment, learning through play, realising students' potential, inclusiveness and healthy living. Together, our authors portray how they and other international educators are defining the value and the values, the mission and the challenge of

the professional community they help build under the NET Scheme.

From exploration to innovation

Three of the contributors discuss how they explore and develop innovative practices that enhance student engagement and the depth of learning. In their articles on the topic "Advice from the Tech-savvy", Mr Matthew

Hogg, the NET at Precious Blood Primary School (Happy Valley), and Ms Shirley Lit, the EPC at HHCKLA Buddhist Wong Cho Sum School, reflect on their experience of using information technology in their lessons and share advice on how to introduce and promote e-learning. In his contribution on "New Literacies", Mr Jason Kasseris, the NET at Homantin Government Secondary School, which has joined a NET Section "Seed" project on multimodal literacy, takes us through the project planning and implementation process and shares his joy of seeing the impressive progress and achievements made by his students. Despite the difference in school context, all three teachers share similar experiences dealing with teething problems, exploring possibilities, experimenting with ideas, and reflecting on their own practice, all of which contribute to their own professional growth, as well as their students' rich learning experiences.

Collaboration is the cornerstone

When there are shared goals, a conducive environment and facilitative leadership, meaningful, purposeful and powerful collaboration takes place. The stories shared by Ms Rachael Williamson, Advisory Teacher, Ms Christina Suen, English Panel Chair of HKUGA Primary School and her colleague, Ms Joyce Wong, attest to how such collaboration can bring about amazing

learning outcomes in and beyond the English classroom. In her story, Ms Williamson recounts how the purposeful collaboration involving different members of the school community in CCC Kei Faat Primary School (Yau Tong) has enabled their student puppetry team to win first prize in the Story to Stage Puppetry Competition. As leader and member of the school team taking part in the NET Section's "Seed" project, Coding to Learn, Ms Suen and Ms Wong examine in their stories the various stages of the project that have culminated in their professional growth and powerful cross-curricular learning experiences for their students.

Learning more about SEN and inclusiveness

The development of a school-based English language curriculum in HHCKLA Buddhist Po Kwong School has been a rewarding learning process for the English panel, including their NET, Mr Richard Portman. In Rewards, Challenges and a Steep Learning Curve: Working at a School for Learners with Intellectual Disabilities, Mr Portman shares his experience of how he and his local counterparts develop their capacity to design and provide engaging English learning experiences for their students in an inclusive environment. He highlights the importance of teachers' professional growth, which is fostered by the professional dialogue they engage in when attending the different cluster meetings for schools with similar support needs.

Creating an environment for our students to shine

Maximising student potential is at the core of the different initiatives implemented by the NET Section. In her contribution, Ms Angela Rawson, the NET at St. Mary's Canossian School, shares her school's experience of implementing the "Development of Text Sets" (DTS) literacy programme. As 'enthusiastic participants', Ms Rawson and her colleagues collaborate to develop a favourable learning environment that engages their P1 students in authentic, meaningful and pleasurable tasks with use of a text set on a theme that connects birthday celebrations and environmental protection.

In the articles by Mr Richard Cowler, our Regional NET Coordinator taking charge of the 'Speak Out – Act Up!' Improvised Drama Competition, and Ms Patricia Wong, Project Manager overseeing the 'Story to Stage' Puppetry Competition, the exemplary performances and the valuable experiences acquired by the student drama and puppetry teams are celebrated and vividly depicted with pictures and quotes from participating teachers and students.

Working-out smart

However smart and capable one is, without good health, one can get little done or achieved. In Well-being: The Physical Pillar, apart from the riveting anecdotes on how he pursues the goals he sets to challenge himself physically and mentally, our 'Ironman' Advisory Teacher, Mr Simon Herd, shares practical tips on how to build the physical pillar of our well-being. As the person who has had the privilege to be the first to read the article, I would like to thank Mr Herd for not only his sound advice, but also the inspiration that we find in what he says and does.

The array of experiences shared in this issue of the NET Scheme News provides a window into how the NET Scheme has been fostering learning communities that value collaboration, embrace innovation and commit to the creation of engaging learning experiences for our students. We trust that among the tens of thousands of international educators promoting English language education under the NET Scheme, there are many who can inspire positive changes on a personal, organisational or system level. We look forward to your stories and your support.

As the 2018/19 school year is coming to a close, we bid farewell to five of the international educators in the NET Section – Mr Peter Broe, Mr James Vickers, Ms Rita Menghrajani, Ms Sala Liu and Ms Mary Hui. We thank them for their contributions and we wish them all the best.

Joe Leung, Chief Curriculum Development Officer (CCDO), NET Section

Perseverance Is the Key

Teething problems are quite normal when using technology in the classroom. If you can see potential in an e-learning strategy, platform or app, persevere with it! Don't be put off by any (surmountable) setbacks you have when first using some 'new tech', and don't disregard some new tech you have tried to use in a class, just because you had a bad first experience.

Here's an example. This year I found a new e-learning platform called Empatico. It can be used for live online streaming between classrooms around the world. I thought this would be an
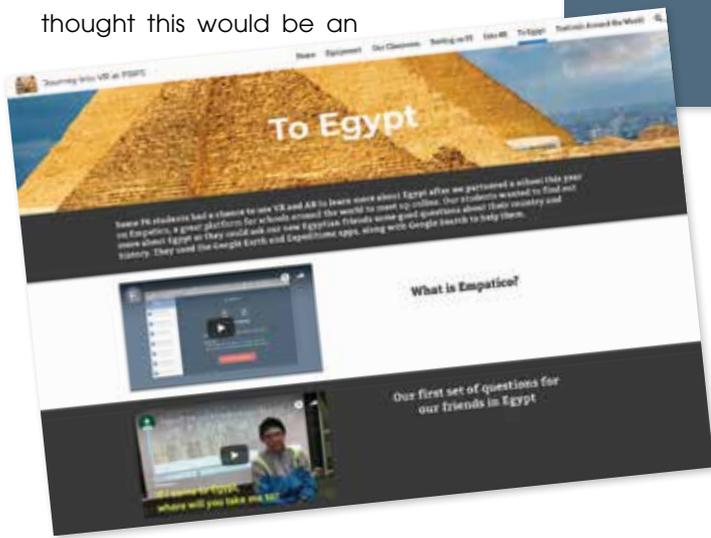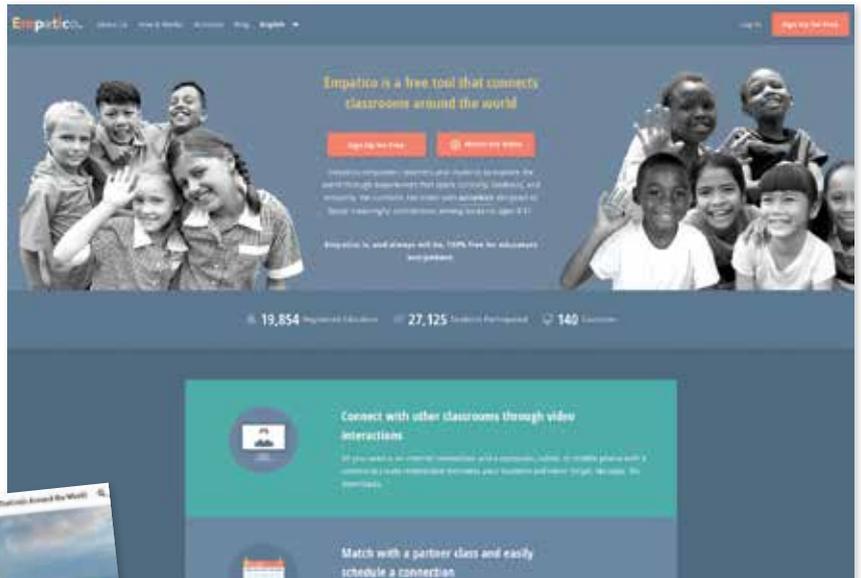
excellent tool to enable my students to learn about many different things in a unique, interactive way and it would also be something that could be used across the curriculum, not just in English lessons. So I set up an account and got our school matched up with a school in Egypt.

Both the Egyptian teacher and I were new to the Empatico platform, so we problem-solved as much as we could before we held a live streaming session. We

'Using IT to Learn, Learning to Use IT'

Using IT to learn and learning to use IT are very important teaching skills in classrooms today.

In our school, students use our school-based e-textbook which was developed in 2012. They enjoy the interactive English classrooms because there are games, videos, audio effects in each unit. We also include Kahoot and Nearpod, which together create a better learning experience. Students learn more actively than in traditional lessons. They have self-learning time and core-teaching time in each lesson. The interactive styles are varied: teacher to students, student to tablet/iPad, student to student (pair work) and students to students (group work).

checked the Wi-Fi connection and we prepared our students for an introductory Q and A session. Everything was set; we were as ready as we could be. The appointed class time came and we tried to connect…and the connection failed. We checked our respective Wi-Fi connections, but we couldn't sort out the issue. The tech gods were against us and we spent about 30 minutes of an hour-long lesson trying to fix the problem before giving up.

But we only gave up temporarily. We persevered with this 'new tech'. As it turned out, the Empatico platform itself was having some teething problems. We first changed tack and decided to send student videos to each other instead of live streaming, which worked really well. With the live-streaming issue fixed, we now have the possibility of a real-time live-stream approach to interactions, or we can do the recorded video versions. Both formats have their own benefits, so from the 'failure' of the first live-streaming, we found an alternative solution that actually brought benefits.

As the academic year is coming to a close, we are now ready to fully use the Empatico platform for many different activities in the next academic year. It took some time to iron out the tech issues, but with perseverance we got there in the end.

Using AR to learn more about Egypt.
Using the 360 photos on Expeditions and the 3D maps on Earth really helped us to think of interesting questions to ask our Empatico partner school in Egypt.

So don't be afraid of trying out any 'new tech' in the classroom, and failing. If you can see real potential in any 'new tech', try it, work with it and persevere.

Matthew Hogg, NET, Precious Blood Primary School (Happy Valley)

www.empatico.org
https://sites.google.com/preciousbloodhv.edu.hk/pbps-vr/to-egypt

An observer may think that the teacher only asks the students to do the online exercise and self-check, and that there is no teaching role. Actually that's not what we experienced. The teachers need to adapt to the new teaching mode as they serve as facilitators, not just instructors. While students are doing self-learning exercises, teachers can offer individual help to students in need.

The preparation time and lesson planning are more important because we have to plan which activity requires IT and which ones don't. The question, 'Why do we use IT?' is a crucial one when we plan the lesson. Remember, using IT doesn't mean 100% teaching time will be replaced by an online platform or app. Teaching is still needed. Students need to interact with people to master the language. However, using IT to teach and learn with a purpose is one of the other keys to success.

Shirley Lit, EPC, HHCKLA Buddhist Wong Cho Sum School

'Story to Stage' Primary Puppetry Competition 2018/19

The 'Story to Stage' Primary Puppetry Competition 2018/19 found its stage at Sheung Wan Civic Centre, where plenty of stories unfolded. A total of 50 schools took part in this engaging, educational English activity organised by the NET Section's Puppetry Project Team. The process began with teachers attending a centralised professional development workshop followed by a cluster meeting to share ideas and good practices to take back to their schools and use with their performing team of five students in Key Stage 2. After devising an innovative story, the team began working on the design of puppets, props and backdrops followed by on-going training and rehearsals up to the day of the competition.

'Story to Stage' Puppetry Competition for Primary Schools 2018/19
1st Prize Winners

	Name of School	Story Title
Session 1	Po Leung Kuk Castar Primary School	Adventures of a Stupid Wolf
Session 2	HKTA Wun Tsuen Ng Lai Wo Memorial School	The Tale of the Snow Queen of Arendelle
Session 3	Po Leung Kuk Chee Jing Yin Primary School	Super Terry
Session 4	CCC Kei Faat Primary School (Yau Tong)	Cup Noodles Man
Session 5	North Point Government Primary School	The Puppet Tree Competition?
Session 6	Po Leung Kuk Leung Chow Shun Kam Primary School	Sleeping Beauty is not Sleepin!

Po Leung Kuk Castar Primary School

HKTA Wun Tsuen Ng Lai Wo Memorial School

Po Leung Kuk Chee Jing Yin Primary School

CCC Kei Faat Primary School (Yau Tong)


North Point Government Primary School

Po Leung Kuk Leung Chow Shun Kam Primary School

Information about the 2nd, 3rd & merit awards as well as the videos of the 1st prize winners are available on the NET Scheme's e-Platform at https://nets.edb.hkcity.net

Patricia Wong, Project Manager, NET Section

Birthdays with Primary One at St. Mary's Canossian School – A DTS Project
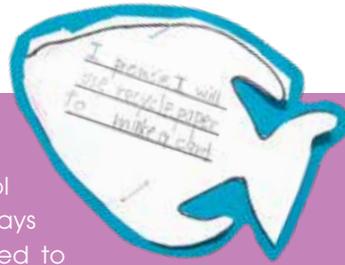
As enthusiastic participants of the NET Section's DTS programme, our school chose to do a unit on birthdays with P1 students but wanted to put an original spin on it.

A local English teacher decided to look at birthdays and their impact on the environment. We searched for resources related to what we use at birthdays with a focus on recycling. We wanted to investigate where paper comes from and how we could lessen the environmental impact of birthday parties by substituting some items.

Learning about recycling (STEM integration)

comprehension. After reading books and watching videos about the paper cycle, the environmental harm of balloons and recycling, the students then wrote a pledge to the environment of one thing they would change for their next birthday party, such as 'I won't have plastic straws at my next birthday party'. These pledges were written on recycled paper fish and turtles and displayed in the hallway for all to see.

Guided reading using e-books

We looked at birthdays around the world to add an international perspective

In terms of 'substitution', we came up with lots of good ideas. Plastic disposable items such as spoons, cups and plates could be replaced by those used every day in the household; balloons could be replaced by paper kites or banners; paper invitations could be replaced by e-invitations, which students learned to write; commercially produced party hats could be replaced by those made using recycled paper, which students also learned how to make.

Some of the other activities included guided reading with e-books; shared reading and reading

It was just so beautiful, creating not only an engaging English learning environment through DTS, but also a meaningful learning experience closely related to our environment.

Writing the pledges

Angela Rawson, NET, St. Mary's Canossian School

Pr. 1 Promises to the environment

From Coding to Writing – Adding Fun to Story Writing and Storytelling

"With Scratch Junior, students are not just learning to code, they are coding to learn."
(Scratchjr.org.2015)

The "Seed" Project (NET Section, EDB)

In 2017/18, the School English Department joined the "Seed" project 'Coding to Learn' (C2L) initiated by the NET Section, CDI, EDB to explore ways to use coding as a means of motivating and supporting primary students to learn English as a second language.

What Is Coding and Why Coding ?

Scratch Junior

Coding is a set of languages which helps and instructs a computer to perform functions. Coding takes place in many ways. Children who grasp the skills of coding can help develop new creative ways of thinking in their professional or personal lives. Nowadays, more schools all over the world are recognising the importance of teaching coding to young ones.

From Coding to Story Writing – ScratchJr App (Primary 3)

Coding is definitely a great way to connect students to literacy since it is interactive, and it involves multiple skills to get the tasks done. ScratchJr, regarded as one of the most popular interactive story-writing and storytelling apps, involves combining digital media, such as images, voice, text, etc., to tell a story.

Last year, our Primary Three students learnt coding through ScratchJr from the unit called Mountain Mona. In the story, Mountain Mona, Mona is a mountain goat
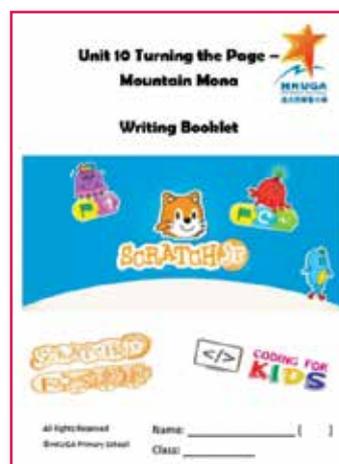
P3 Workbook on Coding

who cannot do what a normal goat can. With Mona's character strengths of bravery and creativity, she makes a breakthrough and finally finds a solution to her problem. After reading the story, our students wrote about and illustrated their own personal experience from failure to success, which was values education in itself. After learning the structure of a narrative, the students worked in pairs to move from planning to creating the animation, which included writing, revising, editing, publishing and presenting.

From Coding to Thinking – The Impact of the C2L "Seed" Project

"Children must be taught how to think, not what to think."
Margaret Mead

When we first embarked on this C2L journey, we had to overcome our own skepticism and doubts. Why are we teaching English through coding? Do we know how? Can we teach coding even though we are not ICT teachers? What benefits would our students gain by learning through coding?

This series of questions kept surfacing. The thing which kept us going was the literature on how the teaching of coding can help to improve students' logical thinking and problem-solving skills and the realisation that other schools were working on this project too. Coupled with the support from the Advisory Teaching Team of the NET Section and the experience gleaned from the other project schools, we ploughed ahead with our endeavour. After months of hard work, with new unit development, trialling of materials, finding the funds to buy the LEGO WeDo sets, we could look back at the fruits of our labour and breathe a temporary sigh of relief. It seemed like our hard work had yielded a small measure of success.

At the end of the first year, our students were writing more, with better structure, and they enjoyed working collaboratively with their peers. Our wish was to empower our children with the ability to think and plan their writing logically and to problem solve creatively in a fun and cooperative manner. The information generated from the

Effectiveness and Impact

Using ScratchJr to create interactive stories has opened the doors for students to execute computational thinking skills, demonstrate learning, develop critical thinking and enhance problem-solving skills.

Collaborating on Scratch Junior

Most of the students expressed that they thoroughly enjoyed using iPads to learn. Since ScratchJr is easy to handle, it is evident that students showed interest and were highly motivated to participate, cooperate and produce their stories with the help of the interactive app. Students could brainstorm ideas, explore new functions and enhance each other's writing abilities with the support of their partners.

When they successfully converted their algorithms into code, their logical thinking was also improved.

Coding in Primary 4

This year, P4 students finished the unit Hamish Bigmore and the Frog and learnt more advanced functions on ScratchJr. As their coding skills were established, they picked up the skills faster and could create more sophisticated animations within the same amount of time. Through revising (CARS) and editing (CUPS) skills, the students enriched the content of the stories with vivid vocabulary.

Enjoying the interactive side of learning

Most importantly, students presented their coding work with their partners in class. Students enjoyed learning from their peers as they put different coding elements in their animated stories. It is evident that students had a better sense of organisation when telling their stories after having their animation coded correctly and logically. They not only evaluated, but also gave praise as well as opinions on each other's work, and that is one of the most essential attributes of ScratchJr.

Joyce Wong, C2L Coordinator, HKUGA Primary School

assessment data told us that we were going in the right direction. This gave impetus for us to expand the programme from Primary Three to Primary Two and Primary Four this year.

At a time when we were again feeling slightly lost on how to expand the programme to Primary Four, the academic advisors from George Mason University paid a visit. Dr Amy Hutchison and her team sat through our lessons, evaluated our Primary Three unit plans and gave us feedback on what they had observed. Apart from stressing how recent research has shown "that it is essential that students not only learn traditional reading, writing and speaking skills, but they must also learn how to read, write and communicate digitally", the team also provided positive feedback on what they saw in the classrooms. They enjoyed seeing "the innovative approach" the teachers were using in "using coding apps to teach both traditional and digital literacy skills simultaneously". They reinforced the idea that using coding apps to teach was "powerful because (the teachers) are using a coding app to generate stories and animations relevant to what they (students) are learning rather than just simply learning coding for the sake of coding. In other words, the teaching approach helps students to see the purpose for learning the computational thinking involved in coding".

As we approach the end of our second year in the C2L "Seed" project, the positive response, suggestions and observations from the academic advisors not only boosted our confidence, but also gave us a clearer picture of the way forward for ongoing development.

Christina Suen, EPC, HKUGA Primary School

1-Day Drama Challenge Brings out the Best in 'Speak Out – Act Up!' Students

This year, 69 teams from 62 schools lit up our 'Speak Out – Act Up!' Improvised Drama Competition at five competition sessions around the city. As ever, the audience was wowed with student teamwork, improvised drama techniques and the creative use of English. But there was something new this year. To mark its move into its second decade ('Speak Out - Act Up!' having just celebrated its 10th birthday last year), we decided to set up a new challenge.

'What can they do?' we wondered. What could they do with the challenge of just three hours of preparation time in the morning, a brief line of dialogue with which to start their improvisation, a room without their teacher or the Internet, with nothing but themselves, pen, paper and a few pointers on what they should be doing?

On Saturday 23 March this year, teams from 11 different schools competing in the first 1-day Improv category event of the 'Speak Out – Act Up!' Improvised Drama Competition had this extra special challenge. Usually, teams are given about a week to prepare their dramas with their teachers to help them.

It turned out that given the freedom and the responsibility to create their own dramas, the students rose to the challenge. In the morning, they were constantly on their feet in discussion, devising and revising their scenes. In the afternoon, they created a fantastic, lively and appreciative atmosphere as the groups competed but also supported each other. We were very impressed by the students' energy, creativity, camaraderie and the

quality of the dramatic pieces produced. The students loved the experience and were sad to leave at the end of the day. We hope to see many of them again next year as well as some new school teams that would like to experience this event and give themselves the opportunity to shine.

To find out more about this event, look out for the Competition Briefing Session, held early in the new school year. Training for this event will also be offered in a 'teacher and student' 'Speak Out – Act Up!' workshop later in the year or early in 2020.

Here's what the teachers and students said:

"The day of the competition was packed with joy and appreciation. The students, adjudicators and NET Section staff all showed their passion for drama and created a relaxed atmosphere for the contestants to unleash their talent. The superb acting of students, the brilliant dramas and the powerful use of English language surely gave the audience a delightful afternoon. The reflection session also played an important role in the competition's success as it allowed each team to share the strengths they possessed and identify the areas they could improve on."

Mrs May Wong, English Teacher & Advisor of the English Drama Team, Carmel Secondary School

"The 1-day event provided a good test of what my students have learned in drama and not what they have been drilled to do or have memorised. The 'Speak Out – Act Up!' 1-day event is a valuable and rewarding experience and I encourage other schools to join this wonderful event."

Mr Fernando Linn, NET, Hong Kong & Kowloon Chiu Chow Public Association Secondary School

"The 1-day drama competition provided a lot of challenges. We were put into a pressure situation and had to work together to find a solution in a short amount of time. Fortunately, my teammates are real angels willing to collaborate and negotiate ideas. This was an unforgettable experience for me and I learned a lot about teamwork."

Jonathan Hu Xiaojun, Secondary 4 student, Hong Kong & Kowloon Chiu Chow Public Association Secondary School

"My students at first were a bit unsure of how things would go, given that their teacher was not with them during the entire preparation process. As it turned out, this was indeed a blessing in disguise, as the students had to take on the responsibility of producing a drama from scratch in English. This gave them immense confidence and a sense of achievement."
Ms Madhu Prakash, NET, Ho Yu College & Primary School (Sponsored by Sik Sik Yuen)

"Right from attending the workshop to joining the competition, I learnt a lot! The techniques that I learnt in the workshop improved my acting and scriptwriting skills. Our team was on top of the world when we won two awards. It was an entertaining day and we made a lot of new friends too!"
Sabrina Hilario, Secondary 3 student, Ho Yu College and Primary School (Sponsored by Sik Sik Yuen)

"It was an eye-opening experience for our students who learned their strengths and weaknesses. It gave an opportunity to the students to take control of the whole drama performance: the plot, dialogue, positioning and acting. It also promoted fast and creative thinking. Our students are looking forward to joining next year's 1-day improvisation."

Mr Garzer Archer, NET, Buddhist Tai Hung College

Richard Cowler, Regional NET Coordinator, NET Section

Collaboration? Look no further than CCC Kei Faat Primary School (Yau Tong)

Collaboration comes in many forms. It is a concept so important to the NET Scheme that it occupies three full pages in the NET Deployment Guidelines. But if you want a real-life example of collaboration, look no further than CCC Kei Faat Primary School (Yau Tong). These dedicated teachers and support staff work as a team to produce amazing results.

The school entered the NET Section's 'Story to Stage' Puppetry Competition this year, and it involved far more than just a couple of teachers and a few students, with everyone from the office staff to the janitors getting involved.

The process started with the NET, Mr Ben Bridges, and students co-writing two scripts and making sock puppets. After performing both stories, everyone voted for the story they liked best. At this point, the NET helped students to refine the script, using lots of adjectives and rhyming couplets which were not only humorous but made it easier for students to memorise their lines.

The EPC, Ms Anna Tang, and the janitors worked together to produce the puppets, using skills and ideas they had learnt at the various puppetry CPD workshops offered by the NET Section. Even friends and family members contributed their various talents to this task. Turning a noodle cup into a puppet is no easy feat, but perseverance paid off and the end result was something to be proud of. Uncle Kai, the amazing janitor, spoke no English but we still managed to communicate and get the job done, and nobody lost any fingers in the process!

Ms Tang called on some colleagues from the Art Department, and the backdrops were designed and made. However, she admitted they were still making adjustments the night before the big performance.

Mr Micky Ng, a LET who also teaches drama, was roped in to help. He says that puppetry is more challenging than actual acting, since so much depends on the voice rather than gestures and body language. Micky was also responsible for sound effects, which certainly added to the overall performance and audience enjoyment.

Each of the three teachers had a role to play. Ben trained the students in fluency and articulation, Micky trained them to use their "acting" voices and Ms Tang trained them for the actual performance ensuring there was lots of interaction between the puppets and they made good eye contact.

In all, 10 students were trained and were able to change roles easily as they knew the entire script. They also improvised movements and gave their puppets personalities. They willingly gave up their lunch breaks to practise every day for the month before the competition. The students who did not perform at the competition attended the performance and supported their fellow puppeteers enthusiastically.

Ms Tang said that everyone who contributed gave their best. The culmination of this wonderful teamwork was even better than anyone had dared to dream, when this first-time puppetry team won first prize at the 'Story to Stage' competition with a near-perfect score. It was difficult to make out which students had performed and which had been in the audience, as they all rushed to the stage to receive their well-deserved trophy. Again, it was a shining example of teamwork, as they all considered themselves winners.

As a result of their fantastic performance, they were invited to perform at the World Book Day on 27 April, 2019 and again made their school proud. They will also perform at school later this year on their English Day and plan to use puppetry in the classroom in the coming school year, supported by the NET Section and of course their own fabulous team.

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

Rewards, Challenges and a Steep Learning Curve: Working at a School for Learners with Intellectual Disabilities

Everyone enjoys a story

As the first school for students with intellectual disabilities to join the NET Scheme in 2017, HHCKLA Buddhist Po Kwong School has provided me, its first NET, with a unique opportunity to learn about the foreign language learning processes of these students in HK, as well as to gain an insight into the wider local SEN community.

P6 students work together to create group posters

I joined Po Kwong's English team as the Primary NET in June 2017. A Buddhist school in Fanling, Po Kwong caters for around 280 primary and secondary students with mild and moderate grade intellectual disabilities (ID). The most commonly occurring condition is Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), with almost 50% of students diagnosed with this condition. Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and Down syndrome are also common. The school's proximity to the boundary with mainland China means that around 30% of students live there, resulting in long commutes and differing first languages. Around 10-15% of the learners stay in dormitory accommodation, and a few live with parents with learning difficulties.

Though the challenges faced by these learners are substantial, many of them are making real progress in their language learning, and English classes and activities are met with a great deal of enthusiasm. That said, teaching in this context is not without its difficulties, all of which provide opportunities for teacher development. In this case, I was fortunate enough to join a strong team of five local English teachers, working with a well-planned school-based curriculum. Key learning points so far have included:

- Classroom routines: many learners feel most comfortable during familiar activities and can get very distressed at breaks in routine. This doesn't mean that changes can never be made, but they must be gradual and, where possible, students should be given prior warning. Surprising learners with a totally different start to the class is more likely to be met with apprehension and concern towards something unknown than excitement at trying something new.

- Choice: learners may have very strong preferences, and ignoring these can quickly lead to a deterioration of trust as well as a dip in motivation. Providing at least two options and letting learners decide helps them self-direct the learning and avoid activities that may make them feel uncomfortable. To this end, we often teach with learning stations set up around the classroom.

- Limits of communicative language teaching: most activities that could be broadly classified as communicative require specific social skills. Some students have a substantial English lexicon but struggle with conversational practice. This requires teachers to broaden their scope when planning speaking-focused activities, and to think beyond standard conversation.

Some of Po Kwong's English Ambassadors

Po Kwong is one of seven ID schools that have NETs. The schools attend several cluster meetings per year, organised by the NET Section to help teachers working in this context. By providing them with a supportive and professional community to engage in exchange and dialogue, such meetings prove helpful as they not only promote networking but also enhance teachers' professional growth.

Richard Portman, NET, HHCKLA Buddhist Po Kwong School

Learning and Teaching English in a Multimodal Way

From the onset, the project 'Developing Junior Secondary Students' Capability to Understand, Respond to and Create Multimodal Texts in English' had me excited. The 'advertising' prepared by the project team really knew how to stir one's imagination and aspiration. It said:

The mission (should you choose to accept it):

Students will be introduced to news stories about some strange, mysterious events, as well as a story about a search for aliens. They will learn about various narrative structures, basic story elements and the criteria for good illustration in stories. As the final task, students will compose a multimodal story using appropriate images and information technology tools/apps.

The tools needed to get the job done:

- School-based textbook (Pearson Longman English Edge 2B Unit 5)
- *Bookcreator.com*
- Collaborative and innovative materials created by us, the teachers and our NET Section partners.

Realising that I needed a way to start the unit off in the right direction, I went ahead and created my own e-book story using bookcreator.com that the students would use for their final task. I actually enjoyed the whole process, which included applying the required grammar and vocabulary needed for mastery of the unit. In the end, I created a model multimodal text for my students and colleagues to cherry-pick from.

The unit of work was about storytelling. In teams, our students would create a new ending to a story, which was a cliffhanger, using the vocabulary and grammar skills learned in the unit's textbook-based lessons plus the supplementary materials made specifically for the project. Finally, taking it all into cyberspace, the way only multimodality can, sight, sound, words and more were fused together to create a final project of worth.

The students were very excited by this form of learning which took "book stuff" and brought it to a new level via teamwork and research. The students learnt storytelling techniques. They also learnt to use specific vocabulary and grammar to give their stories substance, such as direct speech, reporting verbs, and adverbial phrases of manner. Combining these skills with the "Seed" project's focus on multimodal elements such as image choice, the students worked in teams of four: artists, writers, IT managers and assistants. This project also crossed into Visual Arts (VA) lessons as our VA teachers were on board to help the students work on their art panels as illustrations for their stories.

Having created the story endings and the art panels to illustrate the whole story, the students then assembled them online using bookcreator.com. The diverse multiple intelligences of the students were given the opportunities to shine as they contributed in ways that best suited them all the way to the final product stage: online publication.

By adding the multimodal focus and material, the students received an up-to-date form of interactive learning experience that traditional classrooms rarely deliver. Still, the key to this is not the material or the students, it's the teacher. The teacher, i.e. you, needs to be the driving force. So get involved and reinvigorate your approach to teaching storytelling in a multimodal way, complete with structure, vocabulary and grammar points aplenty. Try it. It works.

Jason Kasseris, NET, Homantin Government Secondary School

Well-being: The Physical Pillar

Well-being & ill-being

In recent years, the notion of well-being has grown in prominence. Well-being may mean different things to different people. Without a doubt though, our understanding of well-being should be a holistic one, which includes among other things, psychological, emotional, spiritual, social, material, vocational, intellectual and lastly physical well-being. It is about this final and foundational pillar of well-being that I would like to talk today so that, as Martin Seligman terms it, we may flourish.

Exercise as part of our DNA

The advantages of regularly exercising and practising a sport are manifold. Christopher Bergland explains that "as hunter-gatherers, the human body evolved to run great distances hunting prey and gathering food". In other words "humans are built to run", "to stay active". In such a light, the old adage that a healthy mind resides in a healthy body takes on its full meaning. This reality is unfortunately often in opposition to our modern sedentary lifestyles. While we may not control all aspects of our health or environment, physical activity is one of the areas that we can take control of, but it requires a conscious, deliberate and sustained effort. In other words, you must build a habit.

Working-out smart

All forms of physical activity are good, no matter how small or insignificant they may appear to be. You can find time for physical exercise quite easily if you "work-out smart". For instance, you can walk up stairs in the MTR, shopping malls, etc. instead of using an escalator or lift. This form of workout is great for the heart, burns many calories and strengthens leg muscles. As a teacher, you can climb many flights of stairs in a day.

The concept of "working-out smart" should also be applied to any given sport that you decide to take up. Convenience should be the key. As a rule of thumb, you shouldn't be spending more hours travelling to do the sport than actually doing it. Make use of the infrastructures Hong Kong is overflowing with, such as those offered by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department or, if you are lucky enough to live in a private estate, use your clubhouse.

Harmful self-beliefs

Many people have internalised the harmful self-beliefs that they are not good at sports, or they don't like sports. Your athletic ability is trainable and wired to do exercise, the body rewards us for this by secreting a plethora of chemicals and hormones that provide us with the feel-good factor. Chemicals such as endorphins stimulate our brain and body to help us combat depression, relieve stress, strengthen our immune system, retard ageing, increase our vitality and flexibility, control our weight, and generally favour a positive outlook. Sport and exercise allow us to rediscover the meaning of effort, persistence and will-power. As part of the process, we come to embrace pain and surmount difficulties and fears.

Motivation: What makes you tick

We all know that motivation is essential to behavioural outcomes. Physical activity is no different and acknowledging both our intrinsic and extrinsic motivations is a good thing. I am an avid swimmer. I enjoy this time on my own, in the zone; it is an escape. I find the meditative capacity of swimming relaxing though some people find it boring. I also love running but since I am an outdoor person, the idea of being chained to a treadmill is an absolute nightmare. Being able to get out and about and to see the beautiful world in which we live is what I live for, along with the added bonus of experiencing the satisfaction of tangibly observing the distances I have covered. Others though prefer the comfort of a gym, with its amenities and the reassurance of one being able to stop running whenever they like. The notion of competing can also be a central driving force and individuals will choose to take up a physical activity to outperform others or push their own boundaries. Hong Kong offers a multitude of competitions for those inclined that way. Anyway, your choice of exercise should fit your personal tastes.

Become a finisher

The journey I have made myself over the past 15 years in making that commitment to a more active lifestyle has been a personal victory, as was finishing the Ironman 70.3 this year in Vietnam. Over the course of the 1.9 km swim, 90 km bike ride and 21.1 km run under a beating Da Nang sun with no shade and a temperature that felt like more than 44 °C, I had to delve deep into my reserves of grit, but undoubtedly, the will to not disappoint my beloved daughter, who had asked me if I could do an Ironman one day, drove me to complete the course.

We are wired for exercise, and both kids and teachers alike need more physical activity. By committing to an active lifestyle, you will become the role model for your students and in the process become a true finisher.

Simon Herd, Advisory Teacher, NET Section

Fare thee well, our big Bro(e)

Being a Pisces-Horse, our very own Peter Broe certainly loves to dream big. His time with the NET Section has seen the support offered to secondary schools growing steadily and standing tall.

Peter is inseparable from the ENET Scheme in Secondary Schools. Having started his time in Hong Kong as a secondary NET in 2001, he quickly got "headhunted" by the NET Section in 2004 to become the architect of his next big project, building a small team to lay the groundwork for professional support for secondary NETs and their schools. With little for him to model the team on, Peter started from scratch, assembling a small team of four colleagues and naming it the Regional NET Coordinating Team (RNCT). The rest is history.

Peter is a passionate advocate of professional growth and transformation. Under his leadership, the RNCT not only experienced a growth spurt in 2008, when four became eight, but also gained the reputation as a team of multiple opportunities for its members. The RNCT runs the NET Section's long-running signature competitions, 'Speak Out-Act Up!' (an improvised drama competition) and Clipit (now known as Filmit - a filmmaking competition), and wrote the literally blue-chip NETworking series of resource packages, covering the eight elective modules of the senior secondary English Language curriculum.

Peter has worked with innumerable NET Section staff members since he joined the Section. These colleagues thoroughly enjoyed a collegial relationship with Peter. His gentle, calming, modest demeanor has made him the go-to big bro(e) in the Section, whether for a buddy drink session or for advice.

Peter stepped down as the Head of the Regional NET Coordinating Team in 2012, but this only marked the beginning of another exciting period of his professional life. Proving that there are always new tricks up his sleeve, Peter has since become a fan of the use of multimedia technology to make English language learning more fun and engaging, while not forgetting his love for promoting the art of public speaking. During his time with the NET Section, he has graced many a debating tournament where his incisive remarks have influenced minds and lives in Hong Kong and the mainland alike.

Peter's other memorable contributions to the NET Scheme include pioneering the ingenious regional cluster meetings to reach out to as many NETs and local English teachers as possible, developing the secondary literacy programme Strategies for English Learning through Language Arts and Reading (STELLAR) and masterminding the NET Section collaboration with the Leisure and Cultural Services Department in setting up storytelling opportunities for NETs, among others.

For your legacy to the NET Section and the NET Scheme, we salute you, our big Bro(e). You'll be sorely missed.

William Cheng, Senior Curriculum Development Officer, NET Section

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Correction and Apology

NET Section officers have been very active with English Fun Days at schools with SEN students over the past few years and puppetry has been a highlight. The Puppetry Team has happily inducted many teachers and students into the making and using of puppets as a fun way to engage in English language activities. The active involvement of students in puppetry creation and performance has not only contributed to an exciting and enjoyable language learning experience, but has also increased the students' motivation and confidence.

In our last newsletter, we published an article by Advisory Teacher, Paul Mallia, about the good work being done at Hong Chi Winifred Mary Cheung Morninghope School. It was pointed out to us that some of the photos were in fact taken at a similar event at CCC Mongkok Church Kai Oi School. We wish to apologise for the error.