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2006

Issue

NET 4 Scheme news

KEEPING STAKEHOLDERS INFORMED OF CURRENT TRENDS IN THE PNET SCHEME

Critical Factors

By Ralph Barnes
(Project Manager, PNET Scheme)

A team from Melbourne University, under the leadership of Professor Patrick Griffin, has been commissioned to gain empirical data on the impact of the PNET Scheme. A Principals' Briefing was convened on April 25th, 2006, to present the current findings of the evaluation team.



One objective of the evaluation is to examine the relationship between implementation of the PNET scheme and pupils' developing proficiency in English. The research shows that quality support of the PNET Scheme directly correlates to above average learning, and it is the Principal who is ultimately responsible for supporting the PNET Scheme. This shows the tremendous importance of positive, strategic school leadership in driving student learning and school improvement.

One of the contributing factors which facilitates effective deployment of NETs in schools, is the Principal's tangible support for centralised professional development programmes for school English personnel. Where school management supports the attendance of teachers at workshops and seminars, NETs are more likely to share many new ideas and materials with the local teachers, and LETs are more likely to use those new ideas and materials in their classrooms. The NET is deployed most successfully in schools where the morale among LETs is high and they are committed to improving English learning and teaching, and the NET is given a role in the school that extends beyond co-teaching, to include provision of advice, support, and professional development for LETs, and as an English resource facilitator.

The above conditions can be nurtured, promoted, and developed by the Principal, and this research into the Scheme clearly shows how critical the role of the Principal is in promoting the mission and objectives of the PNET Scheme.

Leadership for Change

By Michael Agopsowicz (AT)



There has been substantial research suggesting that leadership is a key constituent in a school's success. Studies of leadership in schools have moved away from the idea that it is an exclusive function of the Principal, and have begun to examine how leadership can devolve into all levels of a school. This move toward a more distributed approach may require a new type of leadership model, one that embraces empowerment, rather than seeking control through hierarchy. The empowering of middle management in schools will lead to a more responsive strategy with respect to curriculum and professional development, among other facets.

Change management is another issue that has a strong resonance in the current situation. The creation and communication of vision and objectives, combined with the motivation and development of staff, tied to the measurement and analysis of results, can be a powerful driver of progress. A synergy of distributed leadership and change management can create a system wide quality culture, and the vital change in mindset required to ensure sustained improvement.

Parents have a Part to Play

To support the school-based Reading Programme at SKH Yuen Chen Maun Chen Primary School, their Advisory Teacher (AT), Ms. Eva Chiu, presented a seminar *Supporting Your Children to Read at Home* to the parents there. It was conducted in Cantonese in a relaxed atmosphere. The parents reflected that they had learned a lot and had found the following particularly useful:

- different ways they can facilitate their children's Home Reading
- clarification of misconceptions of reading with their children
- techniques non-English speaking parents can employ to support their children to read
- how to choose Home Reading books
- Home Reading as a parent-child bonding activity

The NET Section has ATs who can assist schools to conduct parent information meetings and workshops. If you go to such an event, you will find the content very useful in helping your children to learn English.

家長的參與

為了配合聖公會阮鄭夢芹小學所推行的校本閱讀課程，該校的諮詢老師（教統局外籍英語教師組）丘菁暉小姐為家長們舉辦了一個「英文課外書親子伴讀」工作坊。該工作坊以廣東話進行，氣氛輕鬆愉快。家長們均覺得是次活動對他們很有幫助，他們會嘗試運用工作坊所介紹的親子伴讀方法與子女進行閱讀活動。當中，他們最感興趣的內容包括：

- 各種可以輔助孩子在家中閱讀的方法
- 伴讀常犯的毛病
- 不懂英文的家長可運用的伴讀技巧
- 如何為孩子選擇適合的英文讀物
- 提升閱讀樂趣，與子女共同投入，建立親子關係

外籍英語教師組的諮詢老師除了與學校的老師進行協作教學外，也會協助學校舉辦家長座談會，讓他們了解如何能幫助子女學習英語。如學校安排該等活動，家長們千萬不容錯過。

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Collaboration Leads to Results

By Simon Tham (Chief Curriculum Development Officer)

The Primary Native-speaking English Teacher (PNET) Scheme is continuing on its target of placing a NET in all Hong Kong primary schools. With a scheme of this scale, there is a need to measure and report on the impact. The NET Section has commissioned a team from the Assessment Research Centre of the University of Melbourne to carry out this evaluation task. An interim report from the evaluation team has turned up some interesting findings. Specifically, high-level collaboration between the NET and local teachers has been linked both to improved learning outcomes and a more positive attitude amongst students towards learning English. The important determinant here is the quality and the regularity of the co-planning and co-teaching taking place.

At a recent overview presented by the evaluation team, an audience of school principals heard about these findings. They heard how positive outcomes flow when principals work to create an atmosphere and a structure that fosters productive collaboration. They do this by:

- being a curriculum leader
- taking a first hand role in the overview and management of the Scheme
- developing a positive attitude amongst the staff towards innovative practices
- having an attitude that welcomes and eases transition
- deploying the NET in a way that recognizes him/her as a language and teaching resource
- supporting programmes involving the NET with dedicated human and material resources
- acknowledging that teachers need time to design, implement and reflect on new programmes
- working towards making a structured reading programme a significant and integral component of the English teaching and learning schedule

Collaboration is built upon an open, professional relationship. Equally important is that collaboration takes place in an atmosphere of mutual acceptance and respect. Here, cultural differences are seen by all parties as enriching the partnership rather than placing barriers in its path.



Interview with a Principal

By Christina Suen (APM)

Christina recently sat down with John to discuss the impact of the PNET Scheme on his previous school.

Interviewer:

Would you tell us something about yourself?

John:

I've been engaged in the education profession for quite a number of years. I was the Principal of a primary school in Tsing Yi.

Interviewer:

What was one of your teachers' major concerns?

John:

I think co-teaching proves to be the major hurdle. Teachers are usually wary of trying out something new, especially in front of another colleague, so the AT's classroom support was critical. Both the NET and LETs benefited from the AT's input.

Interviewer:

Were you concerned about adding to your teachers' workload?

John:

That was one of my major concerns, so, as the Principal, I had to make an effort to block out certain times of the week for the local and NET teachers to co-plan with the help of the AT.

Interviewer:

Can you see a change in English standards?

John:

I met my EPC the other day and she pulled me aside to tell me that the teachers have seen an obvious shift upwards in the TSA results.

Interviewer:

How can a few lessons in a week result in a major shift?

John:

I must make clear that the result is not only from these few lessons. My teachers have taken the strategies that they have learnt in the NET Scheme, and applied them in their GE lessons. A simple revision of Phonics in the first 5 minutes of an English lesson goes a long way. It depends on how much the teachers are involved in the programme. As an administrator, I really need to give them the freedom to experiment and to learn, and to support them in whatever ways I can – in terms of resources, or simply words of encouragement.

A Supportive Principal By Fanny Tsui (AT)

Principal, Mr. Frankie Wu, of St. Mark's Primary School extended a heartfelt welcome to Ms. Catherine Stanaway when she took up the job as their NET in 2002.

Catherine, now in her fourth year, has worked happily and successfully. The staff involved with the NET maintain a very good relationship with her. They collaborate well, be it in English Panel meetings, co-planning sessions or school-based functions. The school sees the NET as a valuable human resource in the professional development of the staff, and in school-based curriculum development. She has won the support, trust and respect of her colleagues.

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At various school functions, Mr. Wu has expressed his gratitude and appreciation. If the NET comes across problems, he takes the initiative to help solve them with her.

In 2004, the NET launched a school-based reading scheme; a meaningful and fun-filled programme.

Mr. Wu rendered financial and personnel support.

New books were bought and an English room was set up. A special time-table was arranged. The Reading Programme has been a great success, as the teachers and students have benefited abundantly from the Scheme. Now they are more confident than ever to launch out to the future.



Shaggy Sheep Country

By Wayne Whitney (NET)



By Dorothy Lai (AT)

Educational theorist Lev Vygotski proposes providing language learners with "spontaneous conversation and extensive dialogue with socially meaningful contexts". (1978) These opportunities abound when foreign language learners visit a country where that language is native.

As an Advisory Teacher, it was my privilege to accompany the students from Hong Kong Baptist Convention Primary School on their New Zealand study tour. In our schools we seek to provide an authentic, language-rich environment. This tour has further impressed upon me the powerful impact that the language environment has upon language acquisition.



In April, I set out with some enthusiastic P6 students and 2 teachers to beautiful New Zealand. At Auckland International Airport we were greeted by clear blue skies and our rented bus. Cockle Bay Primary School had organized a powhiri (traditional Maori welcome). After some wonderful singing, our children were whisked away to their respective home-stay families.

On the following day, we were joined by our Advisory Teacher, Dorothy Lai, from the NET Section. The children attended normal classes in the mornings and in the afternoons they visited local attractions around Auckland. A few of the highlights were Muriwai beach, the Sky Tower, bungee jumping, and of course shopping with their host families.

Then on to Rotorua, where the children experienced life on a farm. Some pulled on a cow's udder, some fed the lambs. We stayed in a hostel; inexpensive but close to some fabulous mud pools and geysers.

At another school we shared our different cultural experiences with local students. The next day, the Hong Kong students held a Chinese party. They showed the local students how to make traditional Chinese candy and write their names in Chinese. It was an amazing experience for everyone involved in the trip. I can't wait to do it again next year.

Go West! By Toby Chu (Project Executive PNET)

The NET Section is on the move, and heading West!
From June 27th, 2006, the new address is:

11/F, Tsuen Wan Multi-storey Carpark Building,
174-208 Castle Peak Road, Tsuen Wan, N.T.
Tel: 3549 8300 Fax: 2334 8707

Beginning August 2006, all Centralized Professional Development workshops will be held at our new address. Check the next issue of the NET Scheme News for more in-depth coverage!

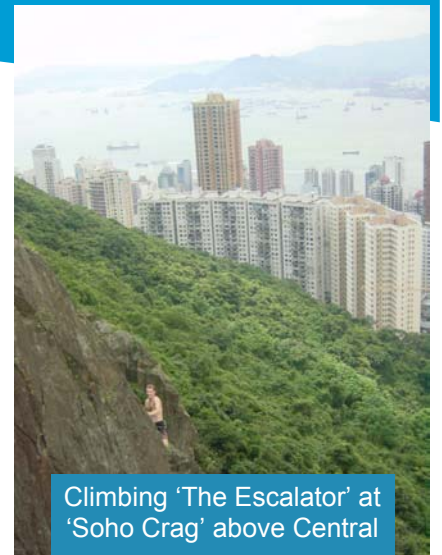


Climb On! By Dan Hannah (AT)

Over 150 years ago, Hong Kong was described as a “barren rock”, but now some say “fantastic rock”. Lion Rock, the prominent cliff looking over Kowloon, has long, multi-pitch routes on impeccably hard granite, giving climbers the feeling of being high above the city crowds. Tung Lung Island, a pleasant thirty-minute ferry ride from Hong Kong Island, is the premiere sport climbing area, with a variety of routes including many of the area’s classic routes such as “Naughty Dragon” and “Dimple Face”. Lantau Island’s Temple Crag combines stunning sea and beach scenery with traditional and sport climbs in the intermediate range.

Hong Kong currently has two guidebooks, one for rock climbing and one for bouldering. In addition, a multitude of courses and facilities exist to train and develop climbers, including five thousand people who take a beginner’s course each year.

Without doubt, the key to enjoying climbing in Hong Kong is developing friendships with other climbers. This is surprisingly easy, and you may easily find yourself heading off for holidays in Thailand, or Yangshou, with groups of climbing friends.



Fanling Government Primary School celebrated its Open Day on 24 February, 2006. Parents and visitors were treated to a wide variety of displays, stands and performances representing all subjects and cross-curricular activities. It was a joyous success, especially for the whole-school English learning environment which has been in the making here since the beginning of the PNET Scheme.

Students ran a school current events stand, and the NET ran a story-telling corner where the main story was *The Gingerbread Man*. There were two English Drama performances that kept a packed hall entertained. *The Enormous Turnip* was a Readers’ Theatre script and was performed by our P.2 students in conjunction with Kindergarten students who shared a Fun Camp lesson once a week. The highlight of the day was *The Rainbow Wedding*, a play performed by twenty students from P.4-6 in the ECA Drama group. The ECA lessons focused on various drama techniques which were incorporated into the story. There was thunderous applause when Queen Summer and King Winter finally walked down the aisle to the wedding march. The drama ended with a rap beat, and was a good example of what can be done by borrowing and blending various styles and techniques.

Turnips and Gingerbread

By Stephen Dolphin (NET)

Professional Development Day Provides Networking Opportunities

By Susan Bowden (NET)

In March 2006, Principal Chan Man Leung welcomed 49 NETs to SKH Kei Wing Primary School for a day of professional development hosted by Lynne Chapman (school NET). Principal Wong of SKH Ho Chak Wan Primary School spearheaded the idea, along with the NET from that school, Ms Jana Ferencova. Sue Bowden, the NET from SKH Tsing Yi Estate Ho Chak Wan Primary School, helped with the organisation. Guests included Curriculum Development Officer Simon Tham, Project Manager, Ralph Barnes, Assistant Project Manager, John Leung and Advisory Teachers, Sally Cousens and Gary Knight.

Sally Cousens coordinated a discussion on the use of different strategies for teaching reading, including the use of small group teaching. She also provided advice about selecting resources to support a reading programme. Gary Knight demonstrated Storytelling. For most NETs, it was their first opportunity to meet professionally since the PNET Induction Programmes when they first arrived in Hong Kong. Lynne Chapman pointed out that it was rare for NETs to have opportunities to get together in larger groups for professional discussion. Susan Bowden highlighted the need for a professional network so NETs could collaborate, share ideas and provide each other with moral support. This in turn would help to create a stronger and more effective teaching practice. She hoped that this meeting would be the first of many more in the future.