



NET Scheme *news*

Keeping Stakeholders Informed

Induction promotes partnership



On December 5 and 10, newly-appointed English Panel Chairs (EPCs) and School English Teachers (SETs) took part in an innovative learning experience. The induction enhanced the 60 participants' understanding of their roles and responsibilities in regard to the NET Scheme and will strengthen the learning and teaching of English through effective partnerships with NETs.

One highlight of the workshop was a group activity where the teachers attributed various job descriptions to particular stakeholders. This created much discussion and reminded participants of their responsibilities as EPCs and SETs in ensuring the success of the NET Scheme.

A 'Hot Potato' activity generated a lot of lively dialogue as the participants wrote down interesting and helpful solutions to a variety of scenarios involving NETs in schools. The solutions were well received as each group shared their results.

Guest speakers, a former NET (Mary Scanlan) and an EPC (Vince Wong), shared their experiences with the participants. Both speakers talked about cultural differences and the importance of collaboration and understanding among all stakeholders.

Kowloon Tong Government Primary School was a popular, easily accessible venue for this event.

By Fanny Cheung, AT

Cluster meeting helps SEN teachers network and share

Are you aware of the work done by schools in Hong Kong for students with special education needs? These primary, secondary and through-schools are quietly working away and achieving educational and social progress with students with all types of needs.

The most recent gathering of colleagues from various schools was on November 4. It was facilitated by Andrea MacKenzie from the Regional NET Coordinating Team and hosted by Barry Sadleir and SAHK B M Kotewall Memorial School in Kwai Chung. Barry, a school drama specialist, shared his experience and lessons in encouraging small classes of students, including those in wheelchairs, to learn to express their feelings. First the students did this through their bodies, then in conversation and later in scripted plays. The students later wrote

about these feelings. Another teacher, Annemarie Bailey, demonstrated ways to use Big Books with her students in her reading lessons. Several other teachers shared their resources and teaching ideas.

The facilitator alerted the teachers to the EDB Special Education Section website, which includes a useful resource centre and an online library. Teachers and NET Section advisors meet regularly to network, exchange good teaching practices and share ideas to take back to their schools. It was good to see a number of schools take part for the first time. This is one opportunity for teachers to learn ways of adapting the curriculum to make their lessons more appropriate to their particular students and their learning needs. The next gathering will be in May at the HK Red Cross Margaret Trench School.

By Catherine Stanaway, AT

The Advisory Committee on Teacher Education and Qualifications (ACTEQ) has laid down the following in a document titled *Towards A Learning Profession: The Teacher Competencies Framework and The Continuing Professional Development of Teachers*. The following is an excerpt from chapter 3.

師訓與師資諮詢委員會（師訓會）對教師專業素質進行了研究，並且根據有關研究作出政策建議。以下是第三章其中部份輯錄。

Operational considerations for teachers' continuing professional development

- The professional needs of teachers vary from person to person and from school to school. It is therefore important for schools to achieve consensus with teachers regarding the content, timing and mode of their CPD. . . .Where necessary, they may need to align their professional development needs accordingly.
- Teachers have a professional responsibility to plan and manage their own CPD. School-based professional development only proceeds well when schools include the individual needs of teachers in the planning, facilitating and monitoring of their CPD.
- As an important supportive measure, the government will ensure that relevant training programmes are provided to personnel working at different levels of responsibility in schools.

運作上的考慮

- 教師的專業需要因教師個人情況和不同學校的類別而異。因此，學校與教師必須就持續專業發展的內容、時間和模式取得共識。… 在需要的時候，教師應考慮調整自己的專業發展予以配合。
- 教師須為規畫及處理本身持續專業發展事宜，負上應有的專業責任。與此同時，學校亦須在策畫、協作及監察教師的持續專業發展時，顧及他們的個別需要，讓校本專業發展得以順利進行。
- 為推動教師持續專業發展工作，政府會為在校內擔任不同職務的人員開辦各類型的培訓課程。

Professional Development and Communities of Practice



Providing professional development opportunities is an integral part of the NET Section's support for effective English language education for Hong Kong students. This includes centralised workshops and more specialised courses associated with Section programmes such as PLP-R/W and Strategies for English Learning through Language Arts and Reading (Stellar). NET Section advisors and coordinators also work closely with individual schools or groups of schools.

As curricular reform rolls out in primary and secondary schools, attention is focused on enabling teachers to convert these changes into improved student outcomes. Teachers interpret Education Bureau documents and incorporate current theories on learning and teaching into effective classroom practices. Through a programme of continuing professional development, teachers become skilled at devising strategies and designing materials which deliver curriculum learning targets.

Contemporary perspectives emphasise the social environment in which teachers construct and contextualise their own learning as they hone their skills and internalise effective teaching practices. What is more important than professional development workshops is the learning and teaching that takes place upon their completion. Teachers are unlikely to attempt new practices in isolation. Innovation has a far greater chance of becoming embedded in the repertoire shared by the English panel when the implementation is a joint enterprise.

Research shows that teacher support is most effective when it is situated in everyday experiences such as classroom settings. It is when materials and ideas from workshops are co-constructed in schools that sustainable improvement takes place. This involves designing an assessment and reporting plan together with effective pedagogical practice in the context of a school-based curriculum. The NET Section supports teachers in developing the capacity and the curriculum leadership to carry out this task.

By Simon Tham
Chief Curriculum Development Officer

Cluster meetings break down barriers

About 25 teachers and NET Section personnel took part in a cluster meeting at CCC Kei Faat Primary School (Yau Tong) on December 16.

Unlike CPD or even school-based PD, cluster meetings cater to specific participants' needs and are participant-driven. Schools should speak to their ATs and suggest topics they would like to pursue with other schools. Such meetings can provide the basis for networking and sharing of ideas, thus breaking down the barriers that tend to exist because of competition between schools.

The topic of the meeting was 'Best practice in PLP-R/W' and participants were very happy to listen to Anna Tang, English panel chairperson from CCC Kei Faat, who talked about the pressures, the challenges of a big school and the logistics of the PLP-R/W. Suki Lee, English panel chairperson at Hong Kong Sze Yap Commercial and Industrial Association San Wui Commercial Society School, shared the way in which her school has tackled integration of PLP-R/W and the textbook in GE lessons with students of widely diverse abilities. Attendees then had small group discussions on the issue of 'finding time' for all aspects of the English programme.

By Laurel Lewis, AT



Professional Development in Action!



The P1 teachers and the NET, Jared Dubbs, at SKH Yat Sau Primary School participated in a school-based workshop on procedural text-types as part of the PLP-R/W. It was an interactive session where the teachers made simple cakes in a coffee cup. Having experienced the process and enjoyed the final product, they felt confident enough for the P1 students to engage in the same process. This experience was even more special since the school has a high number of children with special needs.

By Kathy Davis, AT

Teachers hone interview skills

On Friday, November 20, the first in a series of six experience-sharing seminars was held at the NET Section office in Tsuen Wan. The topic was 'P6 Interviews/Conversation Class' and the response was overwhelming. Some 70 NETs and LETs came, and an inspiring NET, Andrew Beaumont, from GCEPSA Whampoa Primary School, talked about points to note when conducting interviews.

After a short question and answer session, the second guest speaker, Aaliya Jaffer from Buddhist Chung Wah Kornhill Primary School, presented her views on how to best carry out the interview practice. Participating teachers then broke up into smaller groups where they vigorously discussed the ideas presented by the guest speakers and shared their own views on the topic. All agreed that it was a very worthwhile exercise.

Hong Kong teachers know about and appreciate the PD workshops provided by the NET Section. This great response shows that there is a need for this fresh approach where the sharing comes from fellow teaching professionals.

By Bruce Campbell, AT

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Learning through English drama

An English drama highlighting the dangers of taking drugs was one of the events at New Territories Heung Yee Kuk Tai Po District Secondary School's Open Day on December 11. The 18 students performed their drama for visitors. Later they will also perform for the Tai Po Government Secondary School, showing how students can use drama to learn English. The S3 performers were supported by the NET, Ms Margaret Bevens, who was

the narrator, and English teacher Ms Cheung Ching Yi, whose father designed and made the brightly coloured costumes. Members of the school choir took part, as did other student narrators. Ms Bevens said that pronouncing Chinese names had been a challenge for her but the students had really helped her.

The school principal, Mr Lee Chi Sam, wholly supported the English drama performance as it helped make students aware that they were not alone with the problem of drugs and it tied in nicely with the fact that Tai Po secondary schools participated in voluntary drug tests.

S3 student Tong Yee Ting, who played the part of Xiao Long Nu, said she hoped that the group could continue performing plays for their school and other schools as drama performances had helped them become more confident using English. "I also enjoy wearing the lovely costumes," she said. By Margaret Bevens, NET

English flavours Mid-Autumn Festival



On September 29 the spirit of Mid-Autumn was alive and in English at Pui Kiu Primary School. The three native-speaking English teachers first broadcast three versions of the Mid-Autumn Festival story to students. Each story was followed by a simple 'Mid-Autumn Festival' song, used in later activities.

At recess, students brought lanterns to the hall for a 'Mid-Autumn Festival Parade'. Students practised singing the 'Mid-Autumn Festival' song with actions. Then, with lights turned off, students switched on their lanterns and paraded around singing the English song. The parade was followed by an English game which used the actions.

Finally, at lunch break, students were invited back to the hall to meet the three main characters of each story. Students talked to each dressed-up character and answered an English question about their story. Getting their signature earned them a slice of delicious mooncake.

By Vince Wong, AT

A view of CHINESE calligraphy

From ancient stone scriptures to antique paper fans and present-day door panels, Chinese calligraphy can be seen in many places. It has a long, impressive history and is still evolving.

Everyone can learn to appreciate Chinese calligraphy. One can begin by knowing about the essentials, often called the 'four treasures of study'; they are the writing brush, ink stick, paper and ink slab.

First, the brush. The bristles are usually animal hair (e.g. rabbit or horse). For the shaft, porcelain, ox horn and even precious metals and stones like gold, silver, or jade are used. What is closely related to the brush is the ink. Good ink carries a pleasant odour. And to get the right kind of 'black', besides having quality ink, the key is in the strength that is applied to the stroke.

The arrangement of 'white space' also impacts on the presentation of the calligraphy. 'Diffusing ink blots and dry brush strokes are viewed as a natural and free impromptu expression'.¹ They do not always have to be rich and thick. Graceful or vigorous, flamboyant or tender, it is the chemistry of all the factors that contribute to the art of Chinese calligraphy.



Reference:

¹<<http://chineseculture.about.com/library/weekly/aa021500a.htm>> accessed December 2009

By Bonnie Ko, CuO