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# NET *news* Scheme

“Keeping Stakeholders Informed”

## Life-wide Learning through Co-curricular Activities



“Language learning can take place within and beyond the confines of the classroom. To enrich the language environment for the learning of English, it is important for schools to provide learners with relevant, pleasurable and meaningful learning experience through engaging them in life-wide learning activities.” (English Language Curriculum Guide (Primary 1-6) 2004, p108)

As someone very much involved in the development of the English Language Curriculum Guide published in 2004, I am particularly pleased to see the very essence of life-wide learning being embraced by the many teachers of English in schools, including the NETs. Through an exciting array of co-curricular activities specially planned and organised for the students based on their interests and life experiences, our teachers have truly provided learning opportunities beyond the conventional classroom for our children.

Co-curricular activities that are carefully designed and properly conducted mean far more than the mere acquisition of subject knowledge. They are the catalysts to encourage the personal and social development of our students. In working collaboratively with a group, these young learners find their distinct role and identity and develop a better sense of their own responsibility. At the same time, they become aware of the beauty of cooperation and the power of unity. Eventually, both motivation and participation are promoted.

In this issue of our Newsletter, we see co-curricular activities being creatively introduced by schools, sometimes in the most adventurous spirit. Among them are the exciting trips and excursions outside of schools and the city, the festive celebrations at Halloween, the collaborative writing of the school newsletters involving both students and teachers, and the operation of an English café in the English Learning Centre. Of course there are the language arts with songs, poems and stories to inspire and to cheer.

Our very experienced AT and drama expert, Ms Lorraine Tweedy, has much to say about drama, a popular form of co-curricular activities. I urge our readers to read her discerning article which offers lots of good advice and insight. ‘Drama helps us to explore what it means to be a human being...’ writes Ms Tweedy. Indeed, through engaging in activities that connect immediately with reality with all the sights, sounds, smells and natural human interactions, our young learners will develop an acceptance and appreciation of differences, which in time shall mature into a respect for not only oneself but also the others,

and that includes nature and all creatures great and small. Teaching drama might be ‘a risky business’ but it surely is a risk worth taking.

Let me then invite our readers to look at the photos and read the stories in this issue of our Newsletter. See the joy that spreads across the faces of the students, registering delight and excitement. Be inspired by the beauty of a group sharing the same goal and working in harmony. Feel the elevated level of participation and motivation as learning is joyfully intertwined with life with its many possibilities.



To finish, let me share with our readers this dream of mine, which is to see our young learners greeting and meeting life with confidence and joy as they slowly perfect their skills and knowledge to bring in a better world. I am sure all our readers share the same dream. The Principal and staff of Lok Sin Tong Leung Wong Wai Fong Memorial School have indeed proven that no school is too small for dreams. Threatened with closure three years ago, the school has recently won an award for the innovative and caring atmosphere the school has created.

“It is important that learners of all language abilities are given equal opportunities to take part in different kinds of life-wide learning activities to extend their experience in the use of the language and to enhance the development of generic skills, positive values and attitudes conducive to both language and whole-person development.” (English Language Curriculum Guide (Primary 1-6) 2004, p109)

Let’s embrace life and give it a good place in our curriculum.

I wish you a Happy New Year full of interesting life-wide experiences.

*Rosana Chong*  
**Rosana CHONG**  
 Chief Curriculum Development Officer



# Primary Corner

## Halloween at our School

The students at POCA Wan Ho Kan Primary School celebrated Halloween on 28th October, 2011. It was an event that was looked forward to by both the students and teachers for quite a long time. It has gained in popularity every year as an occasion for children to present their creative skills to the rest of the school and to have fun in English.

Halloween celebrations continued for a whole week, especially during recess. Students had the opportunity to learn Halloween related vocabulary and to participate in arts & craft activities, quiz activities and other guessing games. The finale of the celebration was on Friday afternoon when children from each class participated in a dress-up competition. The students exhibited their creativity in dressing-up as various characters and presenting a song/rhyme or introducing themselves in English. The competition was judged by a panel which included our school AT, senior teachers and PTA members. The

winners of the competition were presented with certificates such as "The Creative Award", "The Environmentally Friendly Award" and many others.

It was a fun afternoon for the students who experienced complete immersion in English language. Of course, all this could not be possible without the team work of teachers and the support of the PTA members.



**Sujatha RAMASWAMY**  
NET, POCA Wan Ho Kan Primary School

## Tai Kok Tsui Catholic School Newsletters

Tai Kok Tsui Catholic School teachers collaborate to produce a bi-monthly themed newsletter for the parents, students and community. The newsletters are published with the combined efforts of the Principal, NET, ELTA, EPC, LETs, CA and of course the children.

The idea for the newsletter was conceived almost 3 years ago by Mr. Prakash, the English Teacher for P4-6. The newsletter is currently on its 11th issue and has been a resounding success, well-loved by the school's students.

The bulk of the newsletter is a celebration of the children's writing efforts for that month. This is a wonderful incentive for children to be able to see their work in print and for the parents to see what their children can achieve. Teachers also write articles about their experiences and this is great for the children.

The monthly newsletter always has a Cooking Section written by the school's own Cooking Mama – English Panel Head, Miss Lo. It teaches the

students how to prepare a dish that is usually associated with the newsletter's current theme. This is really useful for the children to be exposed to a procedural text. There is also a puzzle and games section and students who take part in the games section are eligible for a draw involving a small prize. This makes the newsletter interactive and fun for the children.

Making the newsletter is an enormous undertaking that takes several weeks. It takes a lot of time for all the teachers and students involved to produce enough articles to fill the newsletter. After the articles are collected, the English Panel then edits the articles. Once this is done, the articles are given to the T.A. Miss Edith, who then arranges the layout of the articles and makes the accompanying artwork. The arrangement of the articles is probably the most time-consuming element and can take over two weeks to complete. When this is done, Miss Edith then takes the newly arranged and decorated layout to a local printing company to print the actual newsletters. When the final copies are printed, the newsletters are ready to be passed out to the students.

**Michael LO**  
NET, Tai Kok Tsui Catholic School



### Upcoming Primary CPD Workshops

Month	Date	Title
February	14, 15, 18	Supported Reading in Action at KS2
	21, 22	Collaboration between ELE & Other KLAS to Enhance Language Across the Curriculum at Primary Level
March	5, 9, 10	Getting Ready for a School-based Writing Intervention Programme for KS2 – Planning and Implementation Strategies



## An OECD Award Winning School in Tuen Mun

In a quiet court in a public housing estate in Tuen Mun, a visionary new Principal, a group of dedicated local teachers, a hard working NET and a co-operative ancillary staff have managed to transform a small aided primary school into an award winning centre of excellence.

In the 2008/09 school year, the school was threatened with closure when it had only 7 students enrolled in Primary 1. This year, there are 77 excited little children in P1 enjoying a new curriculum in an innovative atmosphere that promotes a homely environment that is both ecologically and environmentally sound.

In 2008, the new Principal, Miss Ng Ka Chun, decided to breathe new life into the school by creating a very special learning situation. She introduced small class teaching, cooperative learning, promotion of self-learning skills, and "Invitational Education" (i.e., teaching practices based on respect, trust, optimism and intentionality).

The school widely employs its IT facilities. Teachers, students and parents share materials with the "electronic schoolbag". There is a distance-learning classroom for joint projects with schools in other districts, and two "smart classrooms" equipped with interactive whiteboards.

Every classroom has a mini performing stage and a reading corner. Books are also spread all over the school to stimulate children to read there after school. The school offers reading programmes for children who arrive early in the morning at school, and intensive after-school tutoring and supervised homework sessions.

This year the school has adopted the Primary Literacy Programme (Reading and Writing) (PLP-R/W) as the basis for all English teaching in Primary 1 and has abandoned the use of textbooks altogether at that level. A recent school-wide survey showed that 80% of the students "loved their school", which is the major indicator of the successful revival that has taken place. Part of this can be attributed to the 'Story Garden', an inviting area maintained by the students where they can wander amongst the plants and read work by their peers that is posted on walls around the garden. The school recently

won an award for the best school garden in Hong Kong. The garden, which is designed in the pattern of the Hong Kong Regional Flag, is frequently made use of to teach the students civic education. More recently, the school has created a special environmentally friendly fruit and vegetable garden where every student has their own clearly labeled plant to look after.

The school also organises a wide range of extra-curricular activities and has a "one athletic/artistic skill for each student" policy which encourages each student to broaden their experiences each term. All of these innovations and activities are widely supported by a very active PTA.

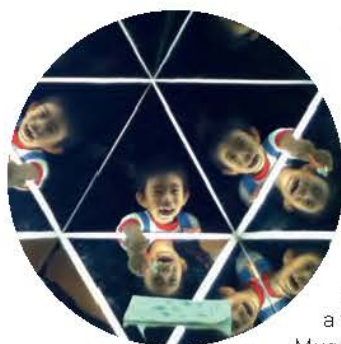
The long list of awards given to the school acknowledges the hard work put in by the Principal and staff. In October the school became the only school in Asia chosen to be a case study by the "International Learning Environments Association" in America. This Project, sponsored by the OECD (The Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development) saw the school featured at a recent conference in Banff, Canada. The Principal recently travelled to Richmond in Kentucky, USA, where she was presented with the "International Alliance for Invitational Education Fidelity Award 2011" again in recognition of the innovative and caring atmosphere that has been created in the last three years.

This is an amazingly successful turnaround. A school that was on the brink of closure is now recognised by the local community and the rest of the world for its quality of education. The number one beneficiary of all of this hard work is a small group of students from Hong Kong – they are very lucky children!!!

**Bruce CAMPBELL**  
AT, NET Section



## The Science Museum



If anyone had told me ten years ago that I would be in Hong Kong and on a ferry with fifty students, I would have laughed in their face.

But yet there I was with fifty Primary 2 students on a ferry. Even with way too many sick bags and a whole lot of travelling, the Science Museum excursion was well worth it.

The PLP-R/W scheme is all about relating real life experiences to education. In Primary 2 the students study a big book called 'The Magic Science Museum'. This book is the basis for their reading and writing in the classroom. The fact that the students can see, touch and smell an actual science museum is a great point of reference.

Okay so it may take some military style planning but the smiles and excitement radiating from the students takes away any doubt as to the value of the trip.

I'm looking forward to next year's visit.

Note to self: Get more sick bags!!!

**Leigh BROWN**  
NET, Kwok Man School



# Secondary Corner

## The ENGLISH CAFE

### St. Mary's Canossian College

On October 3, 2011, Mr Philip Weber, an EDB Regional NET Coordinator, and Ms Catherine Wong, the Principal of St Mary's Canossian College, were on hand to officially launch a brand new concept adopted by the English Learning Centre this year. Our English Learning Centre (ELC) has been transformed into a vibrant English Café on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays under the direction of our new NET, Ms Denise Richardson.

Students were happily surprised and very impressed as they walked through the door of the ELC to experience their new English Café. Enjoying the food

served to them and sipping on their drinks, students enjoyed themselves as the café buzzed with lots of laughter and, of course, English conversations.

Complete with newly purchased round tables and stools, table cloths, fresh flowers, elegant decorations and classical music, our ELC was very café-like. The superb food served

that day included delectable ice-cream cakes, fresh fruit, delicious cookies and fruit punch.

The enthusiastic team of English Prefects under the leadership of Head English Prefects Elaine Lau and Yody Chiu, along with our Teacher Advisors, Panel Chair Mrs Marilyn Yau, Ms May Wan and Ms Jenny Cheng and, of course, our Native-speaking English Teacher, Ms Denise Richardson, were all fully prepared for this event.

Mrs Marilyn Yau had this to say about the café: "It's wonderful to see such a rich English learning opportunity so well-embraced by everyone indeed. The English café certainly is very conducive to learning on many levels."

Principal Catherine Wong agreed. She had this to say about our English Café: "It has a very warm and inviting atmosphere and it is nice to see the students speaking English in a relaxing environment. I was impressed with the ease and proficiency with which the students spoke English and I found their accents very pleasing to the ear."

When it was time to go back to class, no one wanted to leave the cosy café, and that included teachers as well as students.

**Yody CHIU**  
4A Student  
St. Mary's Canossian College

## Visit to Singapore

Students from Ning Po No. 2 College in Kwun Tong recently took a trip to Singapore as part of an English study tour. Singapore was chosen as it is often compared to Hong Kong on a range of issues: from trade to its airport and the use of the English language. Besides learning a few essential and historical facts about the former British colony, the students set the objective to seek out and meet speakers of English. Many of the students felt that the experience was a valuable one because it allowed them to compare their home environment to a foreign one. 'It gave me a chance to feel independent,' said one of the Form 4 students. Another student from Form 5 added, 'Going to the airport and taking an aeroplane was a new and fascinating experience.' In fact, many of the students on the trip had never been to the H.K. airport before, let alone taking a flight to a foreign destination.

As part of their language experience, the students were expected to conduct a street survey about when and where Singaporeans use English. The survey was conducted in a busy, cosmopolitan area known as Orchard Road. As one of the teachers accompanying the tour, I was taken aback by the alacrity of the students to engage in the task. I was surprised to hear, given the nature of the task, a lot of positive comments from the students. One of the students, for instance, recalled

how originally she had been afraid to speak to strangers, especially using English; however, after completing the task she felt more confident to talk with people.

It was generally agreed by the accompanying teachers that the trip helped to expose Cantonese-speaking students to the hard knocks of English language learning. What then did the students themselves have to say about the experience? 'I just love travelling, learning new things, using English to meet new friends and having fun. Next time I will travel for a much longer period of time for sure,' said one of them.

**Justin HAYWARD**  
NET, Ning Po No. 2 College (Kwun Tong)



## Language Arts in Action

Ju Ching Chu Secondary School (Yuen Long) held a *Language Arts In Action Workshop* for over 400 students from Forms 4 & 5 on October 27 in the School Hall. The aims of the workshop were three-fold: to provide an overview of the Language Arts Electives; to engage students in some fun and creative activities based on these electives; and to enlist professional support from the NET Section. The presenters were Ms. Nicola Gram, RNC from the NET Section, and NET teacher of the school, Ms. Catherine Lam.

The workshop was divided into two parts: Short Stories and Poems & Songs. To facilitate interaction amongst students in group work activities, the seating arrangement was deliberately designed to form U-shapes of eight. This enabled students to discuss more freely in pairs or in groups.

Winners of the Hong Kong Speech & Music Festival 2010 in Solo-prose Reading and Solo-verse Speaking were invited to the stage at the beginning of each of the two sessions to demonstrate reading and recitation. The demonstrations showed how students could make use of intonation and stress to express the feelings of characters and narrators in texts.

For the Short Story session, the text, *Little Women*, was used to introduce and analyse some of the features in writing short stories; namely characters, setting and ending of a story. Subsequently, students of each group were given the task of composing a four-part jigsaw ghost story as Halloween was

coming up in a few days. Even though students only had about 5 minutes to compose the story, they were all focused and some groups were able to successfully create spooky stories that made our hair stand on end.

For Poems & Songs, the poem, *Supermarket* by Felice Holman, was used to analyse poetic devices such as rhyme, imagery, simile, metaphor and alliteration. Then students co-operatively created a four-line stanza based on given topics. Some of the impromptu "masterpieces" were very funny.

Overall, the workshop provided the senior students with a taste of the NSS Curriculum: Language Arts Electives. Their enthusiasm in participation and the level of creativity as demonstrated in their tasks were commended by the teaching staff assisting in the function.

**Catherine LAM**  
NET, Ju Ching Chu Secondary School (Yuen Long)



### Upcoming Secondary CPD Workshops

Month	Date	Title
Jan	9,11/16,17	'Speak Out - Act Up!' Improvised Drama Competition 2011/12 Workshops
	12	Teaching Reading and Writing through Poetry
Feb	10	Regional Cluster Meeting on Organising Co-curricular English Activities (New Territories West)
	13/15	NETworking Series: Writing and Presenting Short Stories
	22	Regional Cluster Meeting on Vocabulary Development (Hong Kong Region)

# Healthier Living Happier Learning

## Teach Drama If You Dare

Drama has been high on the agenda for schools in HK for the last couple of years. The NET Section has run workshops, organised competitions and conducted hours of school-based training and support. Many schools have invested heavily in 'expert' support from the many providers of Drama in Education which are springing up all over the territory and flourishing with varying degrees of success.

We can think of Drama as performance, as a means of promoting fluency, developing empathy, as a way of linking cross-curricular themes, catering admirably for learner diversity, multiple intelligences, critical thinking, and a plethora of other benefits couched in educational jargon and seasoned with a generous pinch of psychobabble. The drama processes also have the power to raise standards of literacy in ways that are exciting and positive. Therefore they should be at the very centre of all curriculum planning.

Drama is an active learning process. Strategies such as 'Hot Seating', 'Role on the Wall', 'Space building', 'Conscience Alley' (all of which have been demonstrated in our workshops over the years) provide powerful motivation for writing. (More ideas can be found in 'Drama Lessons for Five to Eleven-Year-Olds' by Judith Ackroyd and Jo Boulton, and 'Using Drama to Support Literacy' by John Goodwin.)



Try using a range of writing techniques to follow the Drama such as collaborative and paired writing. Use different genres like diaries, headlines, letters, messages and speech bubbles. Use open questions to deepen feelings and emotions. Engage the students and the writing will flow. Students need to want to write. Drama can provide the context.


However, Drama in the classroom is a risk. It requires careful planning and strict rules of conduct. It is far easier and less stressful to seat the students in rows and 'instruct' them. Unless teachers are prepared to take the risk and divorce themselves from the slavery of textbooks and worksheets, much potential is lost both on an academic level and ~~more crucially on a human level.~~

Drama helps us to explore what it means to be a human being and that means a more equal relationship between the student and the teacher. We may not always know the answers. As I said it is a risky business!

**Lorraine TWEEDY**  
AT, NET Section

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Printed by the Government Logistic Department