



From left to right: Ms Marian TIGHE, Ms LUK Wing-yin, Ms AU YEUNG Yuet-ling, Ms YEUNG Yick-fong and Mr Kevin WONG

# Developing child writers; every child can be successful.

## Awardees

Ms AU YEUNG Yuet-ling	(Years of teaching: 23 years)
Ms Marian TIGHE	(Years of teaching: 29 years)
Ms YEUNG Yick-fong, Kennis	(Years of teaching: 10 years)
Ms LUK Wing-yin	(Years of teaching: 6 years)
Mr Kevin WONG	(Years of teaching: 2 years)

## School

Pui Kiu Primary School

## Teaching Levels

Primary 3 - 5  
 (Process Writing)

## Teaching Beliefs

“Inspiring children to write and equipping them with skills, so that they can write well and achieve success.”

# Interview with the Teachers

“Students in Pui Kiu not only can write, but are eager to write.”

It was a writing lesson in Pui Kiu Primary School. Some thirty little heads all bent over their desks, with pencils in their hands. The students were working intensely, so intensely that when the melody of “Fur Elise” came over the intercom, signalling the end of class, most students did not seem to have heard it. Thanks to the collaborative effort of the five English teachers, Ms AU YEUNG Yuet-ling, Ms Marian TIGHE, Ms YEUNG Yick-fong, Ms LUK Wing-yin and Mr Kevin WONG, students in Pui Kiu not only can write, but are eager to write.

Like in most other schools, catering to students’ individual differences is not an easy task. “The children’s abilities to write vary greatly,” says Ms AU YEUNG, English teacher of 23 years and leader of the group. Four years ago, the school felt the need to develop students’ writing. That was when the Vice Principal of that time recommended “Process Writing” to the teachers, hoping that it might be a remedy to the problems that beset the teaching of English writing. A core team was then formed, with the five English teachers being responsible for introducing Process Writing into the writing curriculum of Primary 3 to 5. “We thought it was a very good approach, and worthwhile to give it a go,” says Ms TIGHE, the Native English-speaking Teacher (NET) of the school.

“We treat writing as a process,” says Ms AU YEUNG. Instead of giving the writing topics to students and asking for the final product, the teachers help the students to go through the different stages of writing. “We co-teach with the General English teachers,” Ms AU YEUNG explains. “While one teacher is helping students of higher English ability, another teacher will take care of the ones of lower English ability.” The group believes that through Process Writing, the issue of differentiated abilities can be tackled. “It makes writing achievable for all students,” says Ms YEUNG.

## Motivation is the key

In the writing lessons of most schools, students are likely to toil over their writing. In Pui Kiu, teachers make writing relevant and fun for the students. “Instead of just making them do it, we tell them why they write diaries, biographies and stories,” Mr WONG says. “We teach students what writing is like in the real world, and we teach them to be reflective writers who write with a purpose.”

To unleash children’s creativity and make writing more pleasurable, ideas from students are greatly encouraged. “The process approach tells the children that we value their ideas, instead of just focusing on grammar and spelling,” says Ms TIGHE. “In the beginning, it is quite acceptable to make errors, and children will not be embarrassed about them. Some may not spell well but may have excellent ideas.” As teachers are trained to praise students for any ideas they may have, students become more confident in expressing themselves and are more motivated to write.

Conferencing is a vital part of Process Writing. When asked how to encourage students to seek help from the teachers, Ms AU YEUNG stresses that students appreciate the relationship established with the teachers during the constructive and non-threatening conferencing sessions. “Teachers are there to help them to make the final copy better,” says Mr WONG. “They start to see their teachers as resource persons.” The writing comes more easily now that they have cast aside the fear that only less capable students need help from the teachers. “Even the best students come to the teachers,” Ms AU YEUNG emphasises.

One of the key factors why students in Pui Kiu love to write is because everything they write will be



*Ms LUK is conducting a mini-lesson with students who have made the same mistakes.*



“published”. On the desks are some colourful “publications”, bound together with cheerful plastic covers designed by students. “These are ALL the recipes students have written. We have published them as cookbooks,” Ms AU YEUNG explains, “and we rotate them between classes, so students can appreciate what others have written.” According to Ms AU YEUNG, because of all the recursive and refining stages students go through, the final products are always error-free. By publishing their writing at the end of the process, and sharing it with real and authentic audiences, students’ success is celebrated and a sense of achievement is gained.

“We spare a considerable amount of time for students to give compliments to each other’s writing,” says Ms TIGHE. Students learn how to work with one another through peer editing, and how to show respect and appreciation for each other’s work through giving compliments. As a result, friendships are fostered. “It also boosts their self-esteem. Once they are confident in writing, they are not afraid to try listening, speaking, or reading,” says Mr WONG.

### Challenging yet fulfilling

Co-teaching requires a lot of work, and is very time-consuming. “Teachers have to squeeze time between classes or breaks to plan and discuss the lessons, but we are happy to do it because it is worth it,” says Ms LUK.

“Process Writing is a very different teaching method,” Ms TIGHE admits, “it is very challenging for both teachers and students. Teachers are not allowed to cross out students’ mistakes, even though their first drafts don’t look tidy at all. It takes getting used to.”

After years of hard work, the programme has come to fruition. “I was so impressed by the results in the examinations,” Ms AU YEUNG exclaims, “no student left the writing section blank; they used to do that before. Even though some of them made a lot of mistakes, at least they were willing to write.” She points out that students are no longer constrained by the word limit, “some students can write up to three pages, as if they are secondary school students.” Ms LUK shows her agreement by adding, “Even outside the classroom, they are eager to write in English.” She explains how students seek her assistance when writing their own greeting cards or thank-you letters in English.

But this is not the end of the story; the group of five is continuously looking for room to improve. “Every year we find some areas where we want to improve,” Ms AU YEUNG says. “Right now we are trying to standardise the routine for students when waiting for a teacher-conference. We want students to spend their waiting time meaningfully.”

### Sharing the fruits

When asked how they felt about receiving the award, Ms AU YEUNG said the team was honoured. “We took a risk by allocating two teachers to each writing class. We are investing heavy human resources on co-teaching and conferencing. We are honoured this award recognises this risk we have taken to develop capable and motivated writers. We hope others will think the same!”

Eager to share their experiences with other teachers, the team will continue to host professional development workshops both inside and outside of the school. “We want to get all the teachers on the same page with Process Writing,” says Ms TIGHE. “Even if they cannot adopt all of what we are doing, at least some of the techniques will be helpful.”



*Every student at Pui Kiu is a great writer and good commenter who knows how to show appreciation of others’ work.*

# Teachers' Sharing

## Developing motivated and capable child writers through Process Writing

At Pui Kiu Primary School, the writing classroom is governed by principles which inspire and equip students according to the individual needs of each child writer. Process Writing has been integrated and adapted to our school to achieve the following goals:

1. To develop motivated writers
2. To develop capable writers
3. To provide opportunities for children to develop their full writing potential

### Implementation

Process Writing has been integrated and adapted to our school's General English curriculum. Each writing unit consists of approximately 8 lessons. The lessons bring students through the stages of brainstorming, mind-mapping, 1st drafting, 2nd drafting, publishing and sharing. Writing units are sorted by text type and are vertically revisited from Primary 3 to 5. The writing curriculum is also staggered to the General English curriculum, so that vocabulary, grammar, sentence structures and text type features are taught first. Knowledge is then further consolidated and applied in the Process Writing lessons. In the Process Writing units, two teachers are allocated to each classroom, sharing the responsibilities of planning, teaching, marking and most importantly, individual conferencing.



*Ms TIGHE admits process writing is a very different teaching method.*

### Developing motivated writers

Motivation is essential for a person to accomplish a task. In Process Writing, our task is to get students not only to write, but to *want* to write. We believe that students' intrinsic motivation to write can be raised with authentic, learner-centred writing tasks, a safe environment to write, and instilled ownership in writing.

For child writers, it is difficult to creatively write about topics irrelevant to their daily lives. Personal experiences provide children with vivid images and situations that they can recount. Thus, topics like sports day, birthday parties and school camps have triggered students to write excellent pieces of work.

A safe environment is also essential to foster creativity. It is in the expression of creative ideas that students learn how intricate, personal and powerful a pen can be. At Pui Kiu, Process Writing cultivates creativity because first drafts are marked strictly for ideas. Students understand that, at this stage, the teacher values rich content over technical writing. The value of grammatically coherent writing is only stressed later in the second drafts.



*Mr WONG is brainstorming with the students before the first draft is written.*

Ownership over a writing piece also motivates children to write. When students are aware that their work will be received by a specific audience, they have a purpose to produce work that will deserve praise and recognition. At Pui Kiu, a large emphasis is thus placed on the "publishing stage" of writing. Students of varying abilities respond to each other's writing on the "I am a GREAT Writer" wall. Students' writing is also published on our school website, as book compilations, and can even be made into a drama performance. The effort students put into their writing will be celebrated.



## Developing capable writers

Process Writing has also been adopted to nurture our students into capable writers. For us, “capable writers” are children who are resourceful writers and critical thinkers.

To develop resourceful writers, we ask our students to use their “Word Bank”, which is a vocabulary booklet, to enrich their writing. In some units, students also complete pre-writing tasks which require Internet research, story reading or dictionary usage.

Critical thinkers are developed through peer and self assessments of students’ work. Peer assessments train a reader’s critical eye and challenge students to use higher-order thinking skills to evaluate and critique a piece of work. They become independent learners through the feedback they give and are given. Self assessment in Process Writing is also conducted so that students become aware of the differences between a piece of poor, average and excellent writing. The goal is for students to rely less on the teacher as they become increasingly independent and metacognitively aware of the writing expectations.

## Developing students’ full writing potential

Like many schools, our school is composed of students with a wide range of English language abilities. The intention of Process Writing is not to close the gap, but rather, to meet the students where they are and guide them to improve their writing at their differentiated levels. Our school allocates two teachers to each classroom to implement co-teaching and individual conferences. Conferencing allows a child’s individualised needs to be met, and provides teachers with “assessment for learning” opportunities so that the feedback can be tailored to the student’s needs. While one teacher conferences with students of higher English ability who need to be challenged, another teacher conferences with students of lower English ability and provides them with more grammatical or contextual clues. Every child accomplishes the writing task. Every child reaches full potential.

## Impact on students

A student survey was conducted after the full implementation from Primary 3 to 5 to measure the effectiveness of Process Writing to develop motivated and capable writers. Students were confident in their ability to elaborate on ideas to produce longer and relevant pieces of writing. They found that the skills (i.e. mind mapping, brainstorming and discussion of ideas) had helped them write more expressively. Students also enjoyed the writing lessons, conferencing and drafting and were more excited to share their finished products with others.

## Impact on teachers

At Pui Kiu, both students and teachers are learners. Within the panel, Process Writing units are developed by the Process Writing coordinator and shaped by the General English teachers, as they know their students best. Individual lessons and materials are then further adapted to suit the needs of different classes. To start with, teachers collaboratively brainstorm ideas for a unit, and evaluate its effectiveness when the unit is completed. A sharing culture is nurtured among teachers. Within the Process Writing team, Process Writing coordinators meet once a week to discuss areas of strengths, weaknesses and improvements for the programme. Last year, after a workshop on Process Writing hosted by the Education Bureau, we organised a school-based professional development workshop on Process Writing for all English teachers. The workshop was beneficial to the panel and all teachers reached a common understanding of Process Writing and what was expected of our students.

## Sharing

We have developed teaching plans and resources for Primary 3 to 5 Process Writing units which we will gladly share so that more motivated and capable writers can be developed in the Hong Kong primary schools.



*Ms YEUNG is attending to students one by one during individual conferences.*

# Assessment Summary

Implementing process writing to develop the “child writer” and conducting teacher-student conferencing to address individual language needs.

Process Writing in Pui Kiu Primary School is well integrated into the Primary 3 to 5 English curriculum. The writing process is a sequence of lessons which include brainstorming, stages of drafting, conferencing with teachers and publishing the end-products. In the writing lessons, students learn to develop and organise ideas and vocabulary, express ideas freely, incorporate suggestions to improve their writing and give positive and constructive comments on their peers’ writing. The awardees have successfully developed students into “child writers”, who are willing to write and able to write, and know how to show respect for other people’s writing.

To cater to students’ different language abilities and needs, the awardees make good use of the student-conferencing sessions. Conferencing is part of the writing process and all students have the opportunity to consult the teacher in the writing lessons and receive guidance to improve their writing. In most schools, conferencing with the teacher is an embarrassment to the student because it means the work is poorly done, but in Pui Kiu, students treasure and enjoy the attention the teachers give them.

Besides improving students’ writing abilities, the awardees have helped students develop independent learning habits. To make sure that students are meaningfully occupied while waiting for their turn of conferencing, the awardees prepare books relevant to the writing topics and language activities for students to learn on their own. In the lessons observed, the students worked on these self-study materials while waiting for their conferencing sessions. The spirit of autonomous and responsible learning was high.

Effective co-teaching is another example of the awardees’ teaching excellence. In the lessons observed, the awardees complemented each other. They were always on cue, repeating key points, clarifying ideas, demonstrating activities, checking students’ understanding, giving encouragements and attending to individual students. The awardees showed sensitivity not just to the students’ responses, but to the partner teacher’s needs. All in all, Process Writing in Pui Kiu has not only enhanced students’ language skills and independent learning habits, it has also brought about improved collegial sharing and collaboration.



*Ms AU YEUNG and Mr WONG are conducting student-conferencing while other students are choosing self-study materials to learn on their own.*

## **Way of Access to Information of the above Teaching Practice**

Please contact Ms AU YEUNG Yuet-ling or Mr Kevin WONG

## **Preferred Way of Dissemination**

Workshop

## **Contact**

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