



▲Left to right: Ms LAW Hoi-ye, Ms LI Wai-man, Ms LUI Man-chi, Ms NG Pui-ye

# Making a difference with the reader-based English curriculum

## Teaching Philosophy

Being huge lovers of reading, the teachers strongly believe that all students can learn and acquire English successfully in an authentic language-rich environment filled with theme-based readers, interesting classroom activities and effective learning approaches that enhance students' competence in using English naturally.

### Teachers presented with the Certificate of Merit

Ms LUI Man-chi      Ms NG Pui-ye  
Ms LAW Hoi-ye      Ms LI Wai-man

### School

HKFYG Lee Shau Kee Primary School

### Subjects taught

English Language (P1-6)





### Interview with the Teachers

#### Reading is the cornerstone of the English curriculum

"We have a strong belief that reading can make a huge difference," said Ms Ng Pui-yee, the Vice Principal, and Ms Lui Man-chi, the English Panel of the school. Being parents to young children themselves, they witness the power of reading in motivating their children to learn English joyfully and efficiently. They began to give priority to teaching reading in their curriculum in the best possible way.

Seeing the limitations in the textbooks, they made a painstaking decision to replace textbooks with theme-based readers three years ago. "In the past, we taught six units in a term and there was only one piece of reading material in each unit. The scope and exposure to authentic and interesting reading for students was very limited. Sometimes, the publishers just made up the reading text in order to introduce the language patterns or structures," said Ms Lui. "Only by exposing students to a wide range of authentic readers geared to their reading levels will they be able to cultivate a good reading habit. Once they start enjoying the pleasure of reading, they may acquire knowledge of the language naturally," she continued.

#### Hunting for treasure

Getting the right books for the curriculum is easier said than done. The team of four had to select their readers from the ocean of books. They started from scratches, first identifying books relevant to the themes of study, then



▲ It's a snail! Learning English in the garden is fun

digging for necessary elements like phonics, vocabularies, and language structures and patterns, etc. in these books. "Interesting and amusing books and children literature related to their daily life are what we are after because interesting books motivate them to read," said Ms Ng. Hunting for the right readers is only the beginning. The team needs to write up the learning units encompassing a balanced coverage of all four skills, language structures, task-based learning activities and the final writing task. In their words, "It is pretty exhausting. But it is absolutely necessary if we want to give them a holistic language learning experience."

#### Impact on students

Developing the reader-based curriculum might be tedious, but the hard work of the teachers pays off as they gradually see students showing immense interest and ability in reading books at school and on the e-reading platform. It is amazing to learn that students read a hundred books a year. "When the books fit children's reading levels and interest, they learn fast. There are quite a number of dinosaur experts in the school. We teach them how to read and they start reading to learn," said Ms Law Hoi-yee. Once the foundation in reading has gained ground, learning accelerates in other areas such as oral fluency, vocabulary building, e-learning and writing. "We

adopt the 'From Speaking to Writing' approach. Students are both confident readers and competent writers," said Ms Li Wai-man.

The team firmly believes that the reader-based curriculum helps students acquire English in the language-rich environment naturally. They will keep refining the curriculum and help students climb up the learning ladder.



▲ Students are immersed in reading interesting books

► Brainstorming ideas in pre-writing activities





## Teachers' Sharing

### Creating a favourable English-learning environment for language learning

Our school-based English curriculum aims at helping students to lay a strong foundation for English proficiency through ample reading, paving the way for independent and lifelong learning. With this goal in mind, we put a very strong emphasis on cultivating students' reading habit. We want to create a favourable English learning environment filled with a variety of fun activities to motivate and sustain students' interest and develop their positive attitudes towards learning English. Inspired by Krashen's Acquisition-Learning hypothesis, we believe that it is necessary to create platforms and conditions for both acquisition and learning to take place in real-life contexts. We decided to replace textbooks with theme-based readers because readers could provide students with pleasurable and attractive content, which facilitates students' acquisition of language knowledge and skills in natural settings.

### From Textbook-based to Reader-based Curriculum

"Reader-based" is the main characteristic of our school-based curriculum. All the units are organised in themes as suggested in the English Language Education Key Learning Area Curriculum Guide. We immerse students in a print-rich English language environment filled with a wide range of authentic readers, including narrative, informative and multimodal texts, which are closely related to their daily life. The appealing and familiar contexts successfully engage our students in a more pleasurable and conducive learning environment where they learn English enthusiastically.

Using the reader-based curriculum, we motivate students to read English books with enthusiasm through providing comprehensible input in guided reading, engaging them in communicative activities and while reading and post reading tasks. We encourage them to do home reading, revisions and self-assessments



▲ Timely and constructive feedback is the key to successful writing



▲ Students enjoy reading with the teacher in a language rich environment

on the self-directed e-learning platform. Students' speaking skills are developed in reading workshops, children's literature circle, reading aloud practices, story-telling, sing-along, language games and training in presentations offered by native speakers from voluntary organisations. They are confident of interacting with people in English inside and outside classroom.

We expect students to read widely. To facilitate home reading, we arrange students to finish their homework at school in order to spare more time for them to do daily home reading. Since there are no formal tests and examinations for P1 and P2 students, they have more time for reading. All KS1 students are able to read more than 100 readers every year.

### Fostering independent readers and writers

Reading is at the core of our balanced literacy programme. Students are provided with plenty of opportunities to use their target language orally. Pre-writing speaking tasks are strategically integrated in the learning process to help students scaffold their writing task for each unit. Peer questioning, information gap activities and presentations are common speaking activities. We believe that students are much more ready for writing if they are able to use the language orally. With

comprehensive reading and oral input, purposeful recycling of prior learning and split group teaching support, students not only become confident readers but also competent writers. Our reader-based curriculum has brought tremendous progress in students' performance and confidence in learning and using English.





### Assessment Summary

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*Engaging students in guided and extensive reading, interactive theme-based learning tasks to promote self-directed learning*

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The awarded teachers are experienced and dedicated teachers with expertise in reader-based curriculum, gifted education, and innovative teaching pedagogies and learning approaches. They draw on Krashen's Acquisition-Learning hypothesis, innovative practices in gifted education and library science to develop the school-based "Reformed English Curriculum" for KS1, using levelled theme-based readers as the curriculum organisers. The curriculum emphasises the use of authentic literary materials to maximise learners' language use through a range of guided and extensive reading, interactive theme-based activities and tasks, and self-directed learning activities. Explicit teaching of shared reading skills for P1 and P2 students and guided reading skills for P3 students help students develop reading proficiency and good reading habit. A "Reading to Learn" culture has been emphasised at school where students learn to read through guided reading activities associated with levelled readers and online reading materials. A language-rich environment conducive to arousing learners' interest in learning and using English has been created at the school. It is supplemented with an online learning platform named "Self-directed Learning Platform" to provide students with pre-lesson preparation work and post-lesson extended learning activities.

The teachers develop authentic learning materials commensurate with students' interest and ability for each of the learning units. They adopt the "From Speaking to Writing" approach and students are provided with plenty of speaking practices and engaged in meaningful language practice before completing the final writing task at the end of each unit. Thoughtful scaffolding of reading skills, phonics skills, songs, conversation, vocabulary, grammar and writing skills equip students with ideas and appropriate language knowledge and skills for the writing tasks. As there are no formal tests and examinations for P1 and P2 students, the teachers devise online formative assessment tasks for students to monitor their own



▲Two heads are better than one! Peer learning is common in English lessons

progress and promote self-directed learning. Data obtained from all formative assessments are analysed to enable teachers to make informed decisions on refining the curriculum, reviewing their pedagogies, learning materials and assessments.

The teachers are conscientious learners who are keen on enhancing their own professional competence. To equip the whole panel of English teachers with the expertise and skills in developing the "Reformed English Curriculum" in stages, the teachers provide guidance and support to their colleagues through coaching, sharing and in-house training workshops. The teachers strategically open their classrooms for peer observation and develop a culture of programme evaluation and self-reflections. They promote home-school collaboration through organising parents' workshops to help parents master the skills in supporting their children's extensive reading at home. They also arrange school Open Days for parents, as well as for teachers and parents from kindergartens, to let them have a better understanding of their school-based curriculum.

### Ways to Obtain Information on the Teaching Practice

Website:  
<http://www.lskps.edu.hk>

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