



The Starting Point of a Journey

School

Catholic Mission School

Background

Apart from the usual difference in levels of proficiency, diversity displays itself in many facets of the school. The studentship is a mix of native and non-native English speakers. Students come from various countries and the classrooms are truly multi-cultural. To cater for their differences in language ability, students are grouped into different ability groups for English lessons, the ‘Sun’ (weak) and ‘Star’ (strong) classes.

Even with such diversity, students do well in English Language. Their Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA) results are higher than the Hong Kong average and they are admitted to secondary schools with higher academic performance because of their English Language proficiency. With building on students’ strength in mind, the school has made enhancement of self-directed learning one of their major concerns.

Developing students into self-directed learners is closely related to how assessment literate the teachers are. The more a teacher understands how each student performs and why some have problems in particular areas, the more he or she can design a curriculum that facilitates self-directed learning among the students. Assessment literacy was a timely project for teacher development. It was hoped that teachers would (a) be equipped to bring formative assessment into the classroom so that it can become a regular practice for portfolio building and (b) make use of data to inform student learning, teacher teaching and curriculum design.

Level

Primary 4

Strategies Used

1. Needs Analysis: Use of Vocabulary Inventory

When teaching vocabulary items and reading comprehension, it is a common tendency to follow the arrangement of the course book units. Little thought is given to the level of difficulty for individual students. To enhance students’ learning by not repeating the already familiar materials, a Vocabulary Inventory was used to gauge students’ prior knowledge of content-related words of the unit in question. Informed by what the students had marked on the Vocabulary Inventory, the teachers adjusted their teaching to meet the students’ need. In this case, the need is for more advanced materials. The following table is a Vocabulary Inventory completed by a student.

Example 1: Vocabulary Inventory

Part A: Entry test – Do you know these words? (Please complete this part before finish watching the video.)

Vocabulary Items	I know the word (+); the word seems familiar (?); I have no idea(0)
1. a rickshaw	
2. a carrying pole	
3. an abacus	
4. a gramophone	
5. a trolley	
6. a calculator	
7. an MP3 player	
8. a private car	
9. balance scales	
10. a mobile phone	
11. a washing machine	
12. a tap	
13. a kitchen hob	
14. a paper fan	
15. a washboard	
16. a well	
17. digital weighing scales	
18. a rotary dial phone	
19. an electric fan	
20. a kerosene stove	

Based on the information shown in the table and the subsequent quick check, the teachers adjusted the pace or focus of their teaching and the contents of learning materials.

2. Vocabulary Inventory: An Exit Card Activity

The teachers in this school are thoughtful and resourceful. They expanded the Vocabulary Inventory into an exit card activity, inviting students to show their understanding of the text alongside the words they had learnt. Part B of Example 2 is an example of ‘Assessment for Learning’, with students’ work informing the teacher on a reading comprehension exercise, which required students to compare the household tools used in the past and those that are used at present. The inventory was also used as a learning tool to encourage self-reflection, turning the exit card activity into an exercise of ‘Assessment as Learning’. This routine served learning and teaching well even when classes had to be conducted online.

Example 2: Vocabulary Inventory as a needs analysis activity, even when the classes were conducted online

Topic: Names of things from Hong Kong’s past; Names of things from Hong Kong’s present

Tool(s): Needs analysis

Part A: Entry test – Do you know these words? (Please complete this part before finish watching the video.)

Vocabulary items	I know the word (+); the word seems familiar (?); I have no idea (0)
1. a rickshaw	

Part B: Exit test – Complete the following table with the words provided in part A. One example has been done for you already. (Please do this part after watching the video)

Tool(s) people used in the past	Purpose/ usage of the tool(s)	Tool(s) people use now
e.g. a well	to collect water to listen to music	a tap



Example 3: Turning the Vocabulary Inventory into an exit card activity and a tool for 'Assessment as Learning'

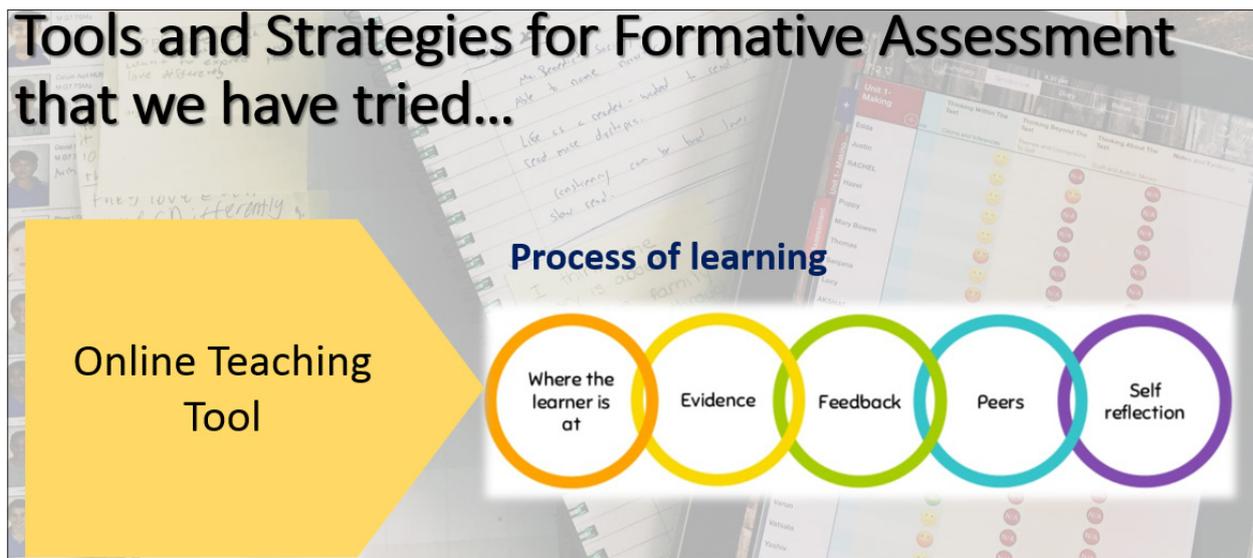
Part B: Exit test – Complete the following table with the words provided in part A. One example has been done for you already. (Please do this part after watching the video)

Tool(s) people used in the past	Purpose/ usage of the tool(s)	Tool(s) people use now
<u>e.g. a well</u>	<u>to collect water</u>	<u>a tap</u>
<u>a gramophone</u>	<u>to listen to music</u>	<u>An MP3 player</u>
		<u>and go anywhere</u>
<u>a paper fan</u>	<u>to give wind to us</u>	<u>an electric fan</u>
<u>balance scales</u>	<u>To measure the weigh of the object</u>	<u>Digital weighing scales</u>
<u>a kerosene stove</u>	<u>to cooking</u>	<u>a kitchen hob</u>

3. E-learning Tools Turned into Formative Assessment Activities

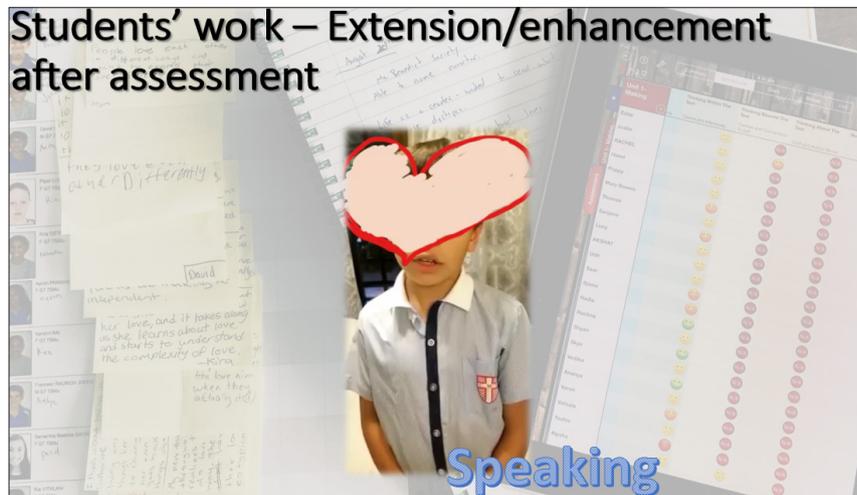
The essence of formative assessment is constructive feedback, which helps advance students' learning. The effective use of e-learning activities could achieve the same purpose. Not only did they enliven the online classroom, but they also provided informative data on student learning. By not stopping the learning process when the activity was finished, the teachers took 'two steps' further, putting students' responses into a feedback loop to (1) engage the students in reflecting on their own learning and (2) examine teachers' own teaching with the subsequent adjustment of the learning materials and mode of delivery. The following shows the tools and strategies employed in the English classroom and how they made the learning process more complete.

Example 4: Tools and strategies tried



Based on the evidence shown in students' work, the teachers adjusted their pace or focus of teaching, consequently enhancing students' learning through an upward spiral. The following examples show extended learning activities that intrigue students, thereby unlocking their potential.

Example 5: A student giving an oral presentation as an extended task after finishing the course book unit



Example 6: Shaping the next step of teaching – Teacher assessed students' understanding from what students had written in the graphic organiser and then decided on what follow up activities should be assigned

18 p. 37_Reading_Part 2_Assignment

Hong Kong in the 60's	Writer	Information: Facts and Features	What about you? What do children play nowadays?
Games children played	Joanne Wu	-hopscotch -hide-and-seeK -jumping games using 'ropes' made from rubber bands	-hopscotch -hide-and-seeK -jumping game
Toys children had	Marcus Tam	-stickers -home-made toys such as paper cars -a rickshaw made of metal -a teddy bear	-TV game -computer game -LEGO

If you could play a game without electronics, what kind of game would you like to play? Why? Please tell your teacher what game it is, and explain how you play it. Answer in about 5-10 sentences.

If I could play a game without electronics, I will play Toy. It is easy to play, all you have to do is build the blox altogether and make a dig toy. I like to play it because it is fun and easy to play. I can make a space ship and race cars, wish you like it to! 🚀

4. Item Analysis of Examination Results

Using item analysis as a means to judge the quality of the test items by examining the students' responses is a surprisingly effective tool.

It is common practice to think of tests and examinations as summative assessment activities which can be put aside after marks have been awarded. Assessment literate teachers do not do that. They flipped them into formative assessment by conducting data analysis, examining the question types and formats and weighting to find out why their students performed the way they did and shaping their next step of teaching. Data reveals facts. They help confirm or refute a general impression formed by reading the students' work. The teachers found that one of the most useful tools was item analysis. By analysing each test item, they learnt, to their surprise, that some of the questions were way above the standard of even the strongest students. The following slides show the analysis and the reflections made by the teachers.

Example 7: Data and item analysis of reading comprehension questions and teachers' reflections

Item Analysis - Reading Comprehension Questions as examples (How many students got their answers correct? How may assessment link to teaching?)

Passenger Guide – Departures:

Welcome to the Hong Kong Airport!
Before you **embark** on your amazing journey, there are a few steps that you need to follow.

Step 1 – Check-in

We offer a range of check-in **options** for travellers.

Counter Check-in:
Enjoy **round-the-clock** check-in at both Terminal 1 and Terminal 2.

Self Check-in:
Terminal 1 and Terminal 2 has more than 76 self check-in kiosks for convenient check-ins. Please contact **your** airline if **you** have any enquires.

1. Who should the travellers contact when they have problem concerning self check-ins? their airline

- Specific facts, quite straight forward
- Referencing skill required
- Hurdle: vocabulary: enquires; changing the pronoun from "you" to "their"
- **How many students got this correct?**

2. What does "round-the-clock" in line 7 mean? 24/7

- V
- A
- H

3. Where can check-in services be found?

- S
- G

Passenger Guide (14%)

	Star 1	Star 2	Sun 1	Sun 2
13 – 14	7	1	0	0
11 – 12	8	5	2	0
9 – 10	4	5	2	0
7 – 8	5	5	0	3
5 – 6	4	7	4	2
3 – 4	0	1	3	6
1 – 2	1	0	4	6
0	0	0	4	5

Item Analysis - Reading Comprehension Questions as examples (Failed to align with what the students had learnt, e.g., exam skills, authentic text)

10 Tokyo Attractions Voted by Netizen

H – Shinjuku
A busy shopping **hub** for you to get whatever you want. It has some world-class shopping malls that you will not want to miss.

I – Sushi Sho
One of the award-winning sushi restaurants in Tokyo. Come and indulge your **palate** with all types of fish!

J – Tokyo
The National Museum of Tokyo houses more than 100,000 important works of Japanese, Chinese, and Indian art, including more than 100 national treasures.

Categories	Attractions
Nature Delight	4. Attraction: (C) 5. Attraction: (F)
Cultural Exploration	6. Attraction: (A)
Palate Paradise	
Shopping Spree	

Tokyo Attractions (16%)

	Star 1	Star 2	Sun 1	Sun 2
15 – 16	1	1	0	0
13 – 14	7	7	0	0
11 – 12	6	1	1	0
9 – 10	4	6	1	1
7 – 8	5	6	2	2
5 – 6	2	6	4	3
3 – 4	2	2	5	3
1 – 2	1	0	3	8
0	2	0	4	5

Our Reflections

We should

- Give students more opportunities to read authentic text (learning from the first reading passage);
- Enhance students' exam skills through practice (learning from the second reading passage);
- Help students learn from the mistakes they have made in the examination; and
- Teach students how to do revision.

For the teachers,

- Link what I have learnt (theories) to practice, bridging the gap
- Help me to formulate the starting point of every lesson



Actions Taken

Planning began after three workshops which were organised for the following audiences, (1) all teachers in the school, (2) English teachers and (3) heads of all subject panels. They were held respectively in late August and the last day of September 2019.

Three units, one from a reader and two from the course book, were chosen for collaborative lesson planning. In between collaborative planning sessions, meetings with the panel chair were held to discuss further enrichment activities for the teachers. The teachers were proactive and keen to learn more about formative assessment activities.

Impact

For the teachers, becoming more assessment literate is perhaps the greatest gain from this project. 2019/20 was a difficult year due to the COVID-19 pandemic and school suspensions, making application of the strategies on online classes and internal dissemination across the panels barely possible. However, the teachers made extra efforts to experiment with their favourite activities and shared their discoveries with teachers of other subject panels. That is the reason why they think of this project as the starting point of a journey.

1. Student Level

Students rose to the challenge and liked getting involved in the extended activities such as oral presentations and written responses to the text they had read. Even with online lessons, they were engaged and participated in conversations with their teachers and classmates to reflect on their learning. The following showed how the teachers responded to students' requests.

Example 8: Peer evaluation as a first step of 'Assessment As Learning'

Student A 2 Jun
I like the TED ED speech, because he made it quite funny so the audience will not get bored, he also tell the audience will know a life of a fireman

Student B 2 Jun
I think one of the main things he's saying is "If you have something to do, don't wait to do it. Yes i do like his speech because it's funny and inspiring.

Student C 2 Jun
I agree with Omar because if you have something to do, do it it dont wait

Student D 3 Jun
i think he had made his speech in a special way so that people dont get bored hearing it

Student E 3 Jun
I surely like the talk because the talker is funny and he is bald

Relative pronouns or reading strategy?

1st Relative pronouns

2nd reading strategy

Example 9: Teacher adjusting scheme of work in response to students' reflection: 'Assessment for Learning'

20 Feb Lesson 5 Active and Passive Voice 100 points

Teacher B 20 Feb

- Go through the power point video
- Watch the video
- Finish the google assessment

Active voice and passive voi... Video

y2mate.com - passive_voice... Video

P.& Active and Passive Voice Google Forms

5 March Passive voice re-teach

Teacher B 5 Mar

- Today's learning objective - Re-teach Passive Voice
- Watch video about the passive voice
- Finish Grammar workbook 12

Mar 10 Active voice and pas... Video

6 class comments

Student A 22 Feb
It is very hard for me to truly understand all of these to be honest.

Teacher A 22 Feb
Can you give an example that you don't understand?

Student A 24 Feb
I don't know what's the differences between them

Student B 25 Feb
when i was done with the google forms,i submitted it

Student B 25 Feb
but in the your work section it says no work attached

Teacher A 28 Feb
+s14013@cms.edu.hk Your google form answer will be sent to us, no need to attach anything in google classroom. Don't worry.

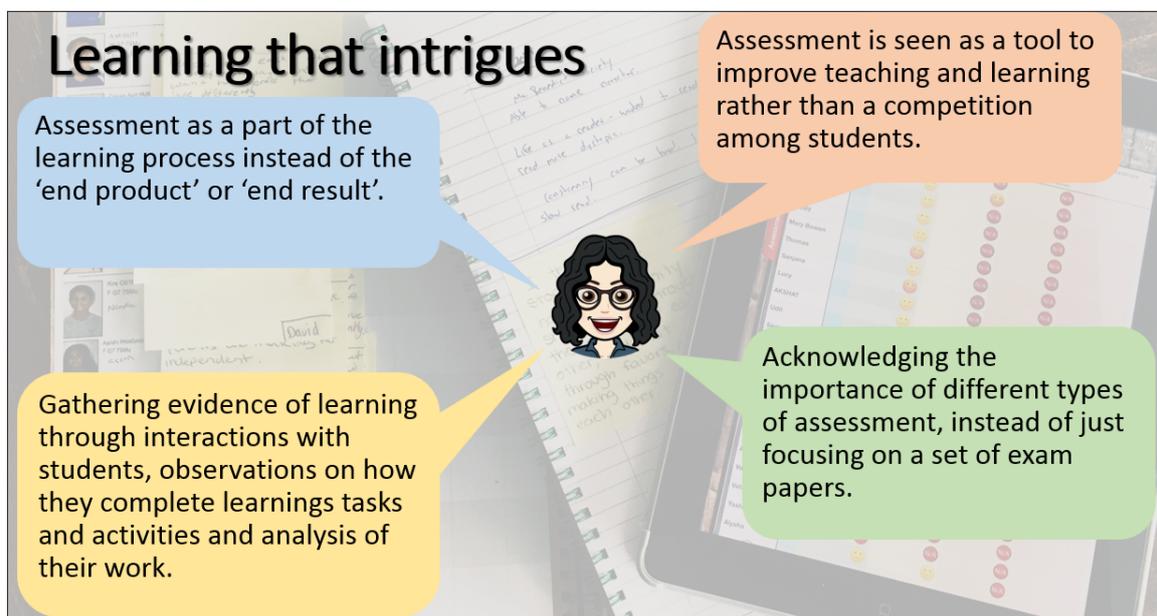
2. Teacher Level

The teachers were positive about the project. The following are items they found useful and inspiring: (a) formative assessment and the corresponding feedback to advance student learning; (b) data analysis of test/exam paper to connect the taught and assessed curriculum and (c) making formative assessment a regular classroom practice. More than a few of them were enthused by the collaborative lesson planning sessions and the materials and suggestions they generated.

Different teachers experimented with different strategies and shared with their colleagues during form level meetings. The following is a list of the strategies and activities they tried out in their classrooms: (a) giving immediate feedback on students' work and leaving meaningful comments for online classes, (b) using admit-slip and exit-card activities to assess students' learning, (c) using graphic organisers to help students understand the text structure, (d) connecting the learning materials to daily life experiences and (e) asking relevant high order thinking questions to generate meaningful discussions and develop students' cognitive ability.

The teachers were positive about the experience. They had a better understanding of the learning progress of individual students and learnt to use concrete evidence to inform whether adjustment of the teaching focus should be in place. They learnt from each other and were ready to try out different strategies and activities.

Example 10: Feedback from teachers



3. Curriculum Level

The participating teachers thought of changing the way of teaching readers and enriching students' learning with an extensive range of reading materials.

They were interested in data analysis and item analysis. After discussing the past papers, the teachers liked what they learnt. They made changes in the way they set exam questions in the first exam of this academic year. Starting with a blueprint, the exam setter made sure that the examination paper included the intended items, the right tools and test formats, some authentic materials and a few higher-order thinking questions. After the exam, they conducted item analysis to judge the quality of the paper and looked for ways to improve learning and teaching. They intend to make alignment of the written, taught and assessed curriculum a regular practice.

4. Departmental Level and School Level

'Assessment Literacy' is in the plan for teacher development produced by the English panel. It is hoped that the experience of the participating teachers can be replicated among English teachers who were not part of this project. Equipping teachers with the knowledge and skills of 'Assessment for Learning' and 'Assessment as Learning' is important for the teachers so that they can participate in the school's vision of developing the students into self-directed learners. To do that, students must be able to reflect on their own learning. 'Assessment as Learning' for the students is crucial.

The school welcomed the CEAL project. Assessment literate teachers are important for the realisation of the change of assessment mode in the near future. To allow students to develop their potentials to the full, the school is considering to replace the common practice of standardised tests with continuous assessment, which includes a variety of forms and formats. Assessment activities will be imbedded in the learning process. The new policy requires expertise in assessment literacy.

Table: Examples of forms and formats of assessment

Formats of Assessment					
More conventional, mostly pen-and-paper < -----			More on performance, process and product ----- >		
Multiple choice	Book report	Storytelling	Computer graphics	Instrumental performance	Learning journal
Fill-in-blanks	Proposal	Poetry recital / verse speaking	Video production	Promotion of an activity	Reciprocal teaching
Question and answer	Story writing	Role play	Photograph	Report with Multi-media	Self-evaluation
Labelling / Figural representation	Script writing (for a play)	Group discussion	Science experiment	Production of a play (drama)	Community service

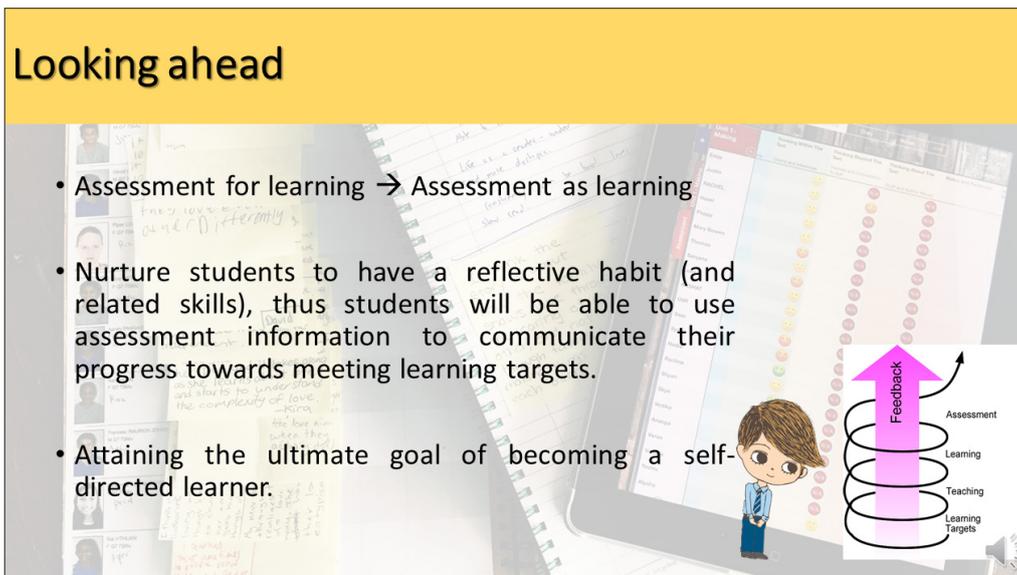
Elliott (1998). *Curriculum renewal: A case study*. ASCD.

Way Forward

The participating teachers felt inspired by the project and considered what they did was just the starting point of a journey. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, many of the strategies and activities were tried out in the online classes as experiments. Then the experiments were expanded to include teaching and provide opportunities for students to monitor and reflect on their own learning. The students' performance was encouraging and the teachers were delighted to see that some students began to 'think like a real learner'. The following slide summarises their plan for the next academic year.

Looking ahead

- Assessment for learning → Assessment as learning
- Nurture students to have a reflective habit (and related skills), thus students will be able to use assessment information to communicate their progress towards meeting learning targets.
- Attaining the ultimate goal of becoming a self-directed learner.



If the readers are interested in learning more about assessment literacy, the following books are useful references.

Bachman, L. F., & Palmer, A. S. (1996). *Language testing in practice: Designing and developing useful language tests*. Oxford University Press.

Elliot, S. (1998). *Curriculum renewal: A case study*. ASCD.

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McKenna, M. C., & Stahl, K. A. D. (2015). *Assessment for reading instruction* (3rd ed.). The Guilford Press.

Racz, B., & Heynolds, P. H. (2010). *Guyku: A year of haiku for boys*. HMH Books for Young Readers.

Regier, N. (2012). *Book Two: 60 formative assessment strategies*. Regier Educational Resources.

Tileston, D. W. (2004). *What every teacher should know about student assessment*. Corwin Press.