



# Advancing Students' Learning with Feedback

## School

Tung Wah Group of Hospitals Li Ka Shing College

## Background

This is a school in Fanling with a student intake of higher academic performance, though not everyone has the same English Language competence. To help the weaker language learners build a strong foundation and expand the language capacity for the stronger ones, S1 students are grouped according to their English ability and taught in small classes.

The students were dutiful, cooperative and respectful to the teachers, but they were not active learners of English. This was reflected in their writing assignments.

Improving students' writing skills and changing the way they perceive what is meant by writing were the focal point of the experiment when the teachers decided to join this project. The teachers hoped to gain the knowledge, skills and insights from assessment literacy so that they could use effective assessment practices to enhance the teaching of writing and to empower their students to monitor and evaluate their own learning from the process of writing.

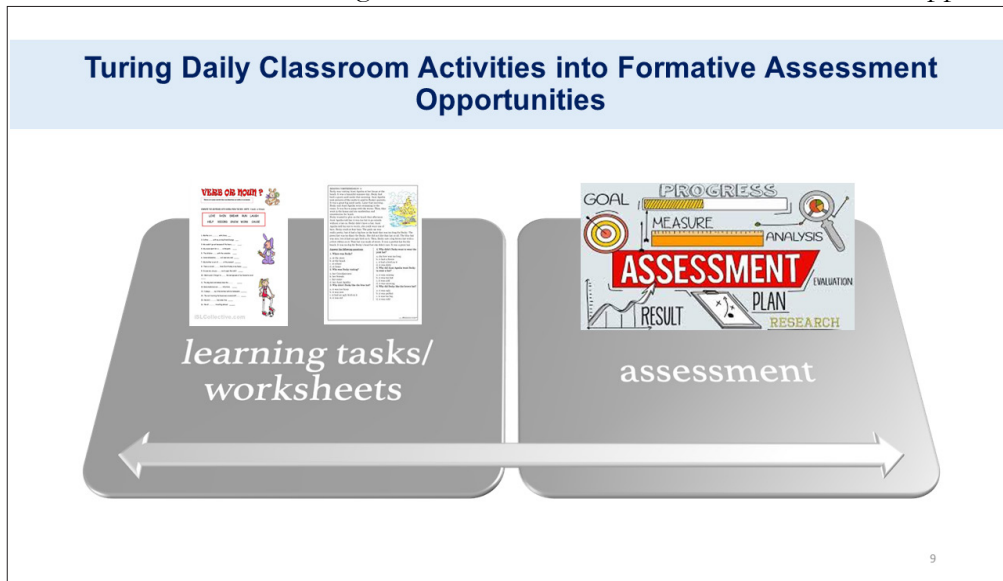
## Level

Secondary 1

## Strategies Used

### **1. Writing Assignments beyond the Designated Writing Periods**

The use of formative assessment activities such as 'one-sentence/one-minute summary', 'because-so-but-though sentences' and 'responses to a written text with a double entry journal' in every English lesson provided lots of opportunities for students to write and for teachers to find out whether students understood the learning materials and whether they were able to express their understanding in writing. Based on the students' work, teachers gave constructive feedback and encouraged peer evaluation and self-reflection.



## 2. Needs Analysis

Needs analysis is an important strategy for initial assessment to gauge students' prior learning, from which teachers are able to determine their next step of teaching. The teachers of this school are resourceful. They used an online polling tool to identify students' needs and consequently adjust the learning materials, e.g., teachers (a) showed an additional video clip when students expressed the need for more guidelines on creating an app and (b) replaced the vocabulary list provided by the course book with words and expressions that were required for the task. Subsequent exercises were provided as scaffolding exercises to ensure students' understanding. The following slides show how the teachers used needs analysis as a strategy for initial assessment.

## Needs Analysis

Assessment tasks	Purpose	Resource
Polling	- to assess how difficult students think it is to create new apps  - to assess students' understanding --- identify the different stages of designing a new app	1. Video Demonstration: 5 apps you show know!  2. Video Demonstration: Mobile app design tutorial

**Input based on students' response to the text**

Additional Learning	Assessment
Vocabulary about (i) People of the Internet age and (ii) Words and phrases related to the Internet age	Vocabulary worksheet exercises
An animated version of the textbook reading passages	<p>Taking notes on key features of the apps including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Name</li> <li>2. Purpose</li> <li>3. Target user</li> <li>4. Type or app</li> </ol>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- to identify the features of an app</li> <li>- to assist students develop ideas for the writing project</li> </ul>
	<p>Polling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- to choose which app students like best</li> <li>- to identify the type of app that students are interested in designing</li> </ul>
	<p>Short writing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- to justify choice of favourite app and type of app to work on</li> </ul>

to assess students' comprehension of the texts  
→ to prepare them for the writing task

### 3. Thoughtful Use of Graphic Organisers

Teachers made use of graphic organisers to help students understand the text structure and then guide them to create a piece of written work from the information written in the graphic organisers.

Beginning from the drafting stage, teachers collected evidence from students' work in the graphic organiser so that they could offer the necessary feedback to help students rethink their own writing. The following shows the process by which the teacher made full use of a graphic organiser as assessment, and simultaneously as a tool to help students to acquire the necessary writing skills.

## Deconstruct the reading text

You have read Texts 1 & 2 and learnt about six interesting apps. Let's find out how much you can remember.

**Text 1**

	App 1	App 2	App 3
<b>Name</b>	All Access	Mindful _____	LazyHome System
<b>Purpose</b>	To find _____ quickly	To solve food waste problem by tracking food expiry dates	To control a piece of hardware that switches home appliances on and off
<b>Target user</b>	The elderly, parents with small children and people with special needs	Households	
<b>Type of app</b>	Problem solving		

use of graphic organiser

# Construct the script

Now, it is your turn to design a new app. Fill in the table below with your ideas.

<b>Name</b>	
<b>Purpose</b>	
<b>Target user</b>	
<b>Type of app</b>	

- visualize what to produce
- overcome their fear
- not an app programmer
- but an app inventor

## Graphic Organiser: A Wonderful Tool for Collecting Evidence from Students

You have read Texts 1 & 2 and learnt about six interesting apps. Let's first remember:

Text 1

	App 1	App 2
<b>Name</b>	All Access	Mindful Kitchen
<b>Purpose</b>	To find <del>the nearest</del> <sup>lift</sup> quickly	To solve food waste problem by tracking food expiry dates
<b>Target user</b>	The elderly, parents with small children and people with special needs	Households
<b>Type of app</b>	Problem solving	Problem solving

Now, it is your turn to design a new app. Fill in the table below with your ideas.

<b>Name</b>	Hw Helper
<b>Purpose</b>	Have many homework answers help students find the to do a lot of homeworks
<b>Target user</b>	students
<b>Type of app</b>	Problem solving

Student's Draft

Now, it is your turn to design a new app. Fill in the table below with your ideas.

<b>Name</b>	Healthy Time <u>Timer?</u>
<b>Purpose</b>	- most people live in crowded city, they would forget to drink much water every day, so this app can remind them to drink water. - Also, this app also can remind you to have breakfast, lunch and dinner.
<b>Target user</b>	- people that live in city - people that have work
<b>Type of app</b>	Enriching life

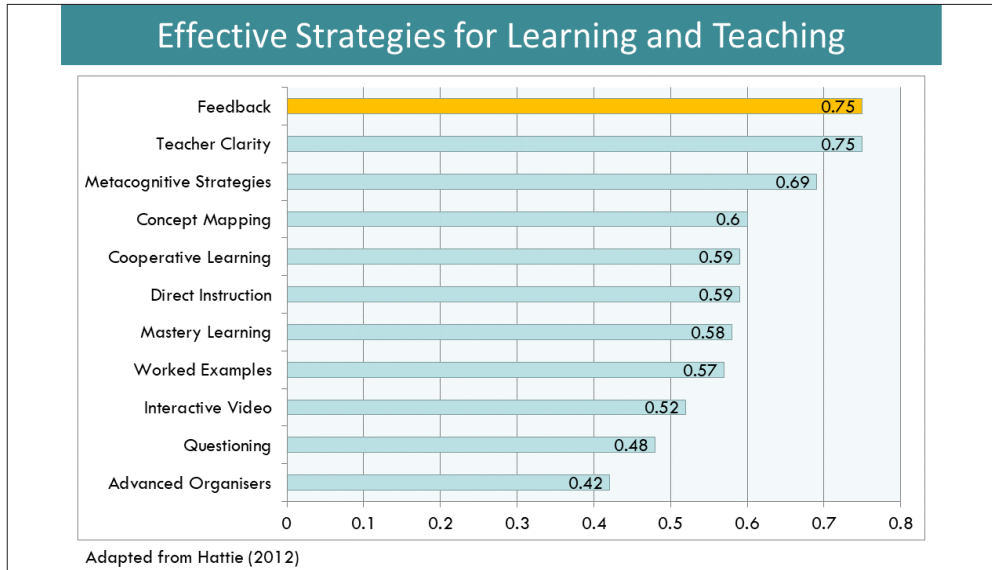
Student's Draft

The Teacher's feedback:

- An interesting and useful app
- How does the app remind its users?
- e.g., sound? light? vibration?

## 4. Feedback

Based on 60,000 evidence-based studies from English-speaking regions, Professor John Hattie and his research team have identified 150 practices that have an impact on student academic achievement. Feedback is among the ones with the biggest effect size (Hattie, 2012).



The teachers found the same from their own experience. They provided continuous feedback, interacting with the students, thus creating a need and an environment for students to keep writing. The students were receptive to their efforts and repaid the teachers' good will with their willingness to write and improvements in their writing. The following shows the proactive response made by the students.

**The Power of Feedback:  
Improvement made by the student**

If you think the normal alarm sounds are too boring, <sup>don't worry</sup> it is okay because this app has many alarm sounds for you to choose, <sup>from</sup> such as beach, forest, ocean, even human voice of the TV stars. You can choose the alarm sound that you like. <sup>then</sup> Then, it would call you when it is drinking time or eating time. <sup>This is</sup> Perfect for everyone who has a busy life.

## 5. Writing Projects

The teachers were dedicated and thoughtful. They decided to make the best use of the school suspension period to enhance students' writing skills. To effectively complete the writing process, continuous feedback is essential. But continuous feedback needs time - and the suspension period was just the right time to get students to go through the whole writing process.

To make writing meaningful, students needed a topic that was relevant to their daily life experience. At the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, the course unit 'Connected' was taught. A writing project with the topic of 'Creating an App' was designed. Students were required to design and write about an app which would make life better or solve a daily life problem. The final product was an oral presentation.

A writing project provided room for continuous feedback as students, beginning with gathering and generating ideas for sharing with, and receiving feedback from friends and classmates. This was followed by revision and further feedback from the teacher. In addition to the feedback shown in the previous slides, the following shows further rounds of feedback by the teacher and their effects.

Self-evaluation became the norm in a writing project.

**Student's Draft**

Name	School talk
Purpose	- Enter the school name - Then, you can talk to your classmates and teachers. - No use <del>no</del> phone number need to <del>your</del>
Target user	students and teachers
Type of app	Problem-solving

*Capitalize initials for names*

*Try to write complete sentences*

*Mind plural nouns*  
if students :>!  
teachers :>!

The feedback loop: Teacher's comments and student's self-evaluation:

- Capitalize initials for names
- Mind plural nouns



### Student's Final Draft

Now write your presentation script in about 180 words. You should pay attention to the use of vocabulary items (words and phrases related to the Internet age), tenses, adjectives, question tags, pronouns and possessives.

Through self-reflection and making references to resource materials, the student showed improvement.

Good morning Miss Chan and my fellow classmate. <sup>x (sing./pl.)</sup>

Today I would like to introduce a new app. It is called School Talk. <sup>(sing./pl.) x (sp.)</sup> If you want to ask teacher some things about <sup>(sp.)</sup> homework but you are not home, then my app can help you so this app is designed for students and teachers. <sup>(sp.)</sup> My app is problem solving. You can

**Writing prompts**

- Who is the audience? What is the purpose of giving a presentation?
- Start by introducing the name of the app
- Tell who the app is for and explain why.

### Student's Final Draft

Good morning teacher and my fellow classmates

Today I would like to introduce a new app. The app is called Home work Helper. It is designed especially for student but I think teacher could use it too. As we all know, we have some problem of the home work. Teacher also have something they don't know don't we? For example,

**Writing prompts**

- Who is the audience? What is the purpose of giving a presentation?
- Start by introducing the name of the app
- Tell who the app is for and explain why they need the app

### Self-evaluation

Have I ...

- started by greeting the audience?
- introduced the topic clearly?
- connected ideas about the topic with appropriate connectives?
- included questions to engage the audience, e.g. by using question tags?
- stayed on topic?
- addressed the audience again in the closing?

## Actions Taken

Planning began after the first of the three designated workshops. The designated workshops were for the following audience, (1) all teachers in the school, (2) English teachers and (3) heads of all subject panels.

The first collaborative lesson planning meeting began in late September. Two textbook units were discussed and one of the units evolved into a writing project.

The second and third workshops were held in late October. Teachers found the topics of data analysis and item analysis useful and inspiring, generating a great deal of interest in the 'Assessment Literacy' project. More discussions could have been organised had the school days been unaffected by COVID-19.

Zoom meetings were held during the school suspension period for further discussions on assessment related issues, e.g., rubrics for self-reflections by the students on their own written work.

## Impact

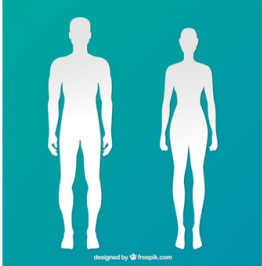
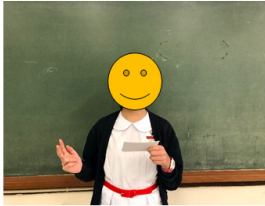
For the teachers, watching students improving in their writing skills and engaging in the writing task was perhaps the greatest gain from this project. 2019/20 was a difficult year. With the COVID-19 pandemic and school suspensions, application of the strategies on online classes and internal dissemination across the panels became barely possible. However, the teachers made extra efforts to engage the students in extended writing by going through the writing process with them.

### 1. Student Level

The students were responsive to this mode of learning. Many enjoyed the process and cherished the frequent feedback from the teacher and their classmates. They generated interesting ideas by continuously revising and refining their writing. The following are some results of the writing project.

### Illness Killer


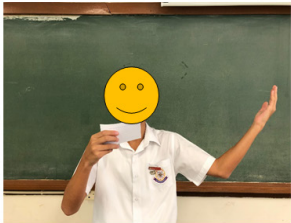
It can check your body.  
You just need to open  
the camera on your  
phone.



designed by freepik.com

### Electrical Appliances Check

This app can check  
your broken electrical  
appliances and tell you  
where the problem is.





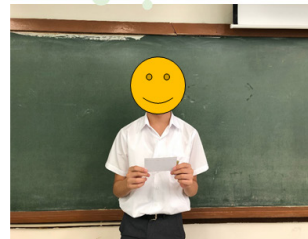
## Happy Timer

If you think the normal alarm sound is boring, don't worry. This app has many alarm sounds for you.



## Fantasy Dream Food

This app is for foodies who love different types of food. It uses AR technology which can project the the dish you like.



## 2. Teacher Level

Apart from the ideas and concepts of assessment literacy in general, the teachers found the following noteworthy:

- Exam paper item analyses (different question types and skills required) for the improvement of assessment design.
- Process writing as it allows opportunities for writers to reflect on their own writings and make improvements as they write.
- The teaching ideas shared in the workshops were insightful.
- Analysis of students' performance in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) reading paper.
- Deconstructing a written text and using the information they contain to form a new piece of written work.
- Think-Pair-Share activities among students.
- How to design teaching materials that can clearly reflect students' learning progress and make good use of teacher's feedback to further assist students.

- The teaching strategies and methods shared during the collaborative lesson planning meetings, which are worth trying.

The following strategies have been tried out by the teachers:

- Think-pair-share: students were better engaged in their learning.
- Group discussion and polling during online lessons.
- Feedback given generally to the whole class and to individual students, especially when face to face interaction was possible, e.g., pair work and group discussions (prior to the lesson, students prepared for the discussion as homework).
- The writing projects: the participating students responded enthusiastically because they had lots of ideas about their new apps.
- Writing a one-sentence summary of the lesson – students were able to tell briefly what they had learned in the lesson.
- Deconstructing a written text about new apps and designing and writing a new app of their own; students found it much easier to process the information in the text. They were also more confident about designing their own app.
- Process writing and the writing process: brainstorming → drafting → teacher's feedback → editing → revision and rewriting → writing product
- Constructing meaningful feedback is very useful and valued.
- Text analysis of Unit 8 for designing new apps and scaffolding writing activities.
- Students of one group (most of them were of below average ability) were able to write about their own apps and a few cross-border students even submitted their work to eClass.

### Way Forward

The teachers stated that they will definitely use or experiment with the following when circumstances allow.

- Group discussions when school resumes
- Consultations with individual students to help students improve their writing skills
- Think-Pair-Share activities for self-assessment and peer assessment
- Making use of formative assessment to engage students in doing tasks that allow teachers to assess the learning progress before the 'final task'
- Group assessment task, in particular collaborative learning among students

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.

Culham, R. (2010). *Traits of writing*. Scholastic.

Fisher, D., Frey, N., & Hattie, J. (2016). *Visible learning for literacy, Grades K-12: Implementing the practices that work best to accelerate student learning*. Corwin.

Hattie, J. (2012). *Visible learning for teachers: Maximizing impact on learning*. Routledge.

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

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.