



賽馬會「知優致優」計劃

Jockey Club “Giftedness Into Flourishing Talents” Project

Modes of Public Transport – How to Make Them Better

English Language Primary 5

Level 1: School-based Whole-class Teaching



香港賽馬會慈善信託基金

The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust

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Background and Notes

The design of the learning and teaching plan reflects the actual circumstances of the particular school at the time of implementation. As it is developed and tailor-made to meet the specific cognitive and affective needs of students, all learning and teaching resources are for reference only.

When adapting the materials, curriculum, instructional and assessment modifications can be made in accordance with the diverse needs and abilities, learning styles and aspirations of students, professional competence of teachers, and gifted education development of the schools.

Teachers are strongly recommended to read the introduction, theoretical background and summary of the resource package to have a better understanding of the principles of Gifted Education and strategies for implementation.

This unit includes 1 foreword, 1 lesson plan and students' work.




With reference to our resources, educators can design suitable learning activities and implement the elements of Gifted Education, based on students' needs and interests, and teaching experience, so as to unfold students' potentials to the fullest.

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Modes of Public Transport—How to Make Them Better

Grade: Primary 5

No. of Lessons (Learning Time): 1 Lesson (35 minutes)

Prior Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Different modes of public transport in Hong Kong - Experience in taking 3 to 4 types of public transport - Using appropriate adjectives to describe one's "senses"
Learning Objectives	<p>Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students can describe the special features of different modes of public transport verbally - Students can express their opinions verbally about a specific mode of transport with appropriate adjectives <p>Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students can set questions and give appropriate suggestions to enhance a specific mode of public transport in groups - Students can give creative ideas and suggestions based on the problems of a specific mode of public transport <p>Values and Attitudes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students will develop enjoyment in writing short stories - Students become more aware of how one's personality affects one's conduct
Learning & Teaching Strategies	Differentiated Questions, Group Discussion, Peer Evaluation
Operation Mode of Gifted Education	Level 1: School-based Whole-class Teaching
Core Elements of Gifted Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Higher-order Thinking Skills  Creativity  Personal-social Competence

Foreword / Background

Expressing opinions on problems and providing solutions to given situations in spoken form is one of the learning targets that students in Hong Kong are suggested to achieve in Key Stage 2 (Curriculum Development Council, 2017). In Hong Kong, most teachers adopt a teacher-centered approach to teach students are used to learning how to express their opinions and describe the solutions. Students are expected to express their opinions using the target language structures, ‘I like taking the train because it is convenient,’ or ‘I hate taking the ferry because it is slow.’ At the beginning of the lesson, students usually learn about adjectives to express opinions, the target vocabulary, and the target language structures which are stated in the textbook together with teachers’ verbal explanation. Students then practise expressing their opinions through completing worksheets or workbooks.

To facilitate the development of higher-order thinking skills of students while learning the above contents, teachers adopt different graphic organizers, usually the 13 HOTS Diagrams, in regular classrooms. During the learning process, most of the students usually go through the same learning experience, using the same learning materials, the same graphic organizers and the same textbook, and hence the development of two core elements of gifted education, namely, students’ creativity and personal-social competence, have been limited in regular English language classrooms.

The target group of students involved in this discussion was a group of Primary 5 classes. Based on students’ overall academic performance, they were divided into 4 classes, one of which was a higher-ability class. The following discussion will focus on the higher-ability class. This class of students has comprehensive English language skills that enable them to complete all the tasks and reach the basic requirements set by the teacher. There are two major groups of students in the class. From teacher’s daily observation, one group of students is rather passive in English lessons. They seldom initiate or express their own ideas since they are afraid to make any grammatical mistakes. They lack self-confidence in expressing themselves. Another group of students is confident in expressing themselves with perfect accuracy. They can speak accurately with sufficient confidence.

Based on the teacher-centred approach mentioned, it was found that students were guided to express their opinions using the target language structures, and as a result, their ideas were limited to a certain extent. With the given language structures and vocabulary items, even if students were willing to express their own opinions verbally, more or less similar opinions were expressed, with a lack of creativity or uniqueness. Usually simple sentences without too many individual opinions were produced. Students only expressed their opinions when they were required to complete a task which would be marked.

Objectives of Collaboration

To reinforce the students' learning process and their ability to give opinions, teachers reviewed the learning needs of the group of students with the Professional Development and School Support (PDSS) Team of Project GIFT from the point of view of collaborative lesson planning (CLP). From the teacher's daily observation, the group of students with a higher level of confidence in using English accurately was willing to express their own opinions during daily conversation and they were more engaged when they were involved in activities which allowed them to challenge others' ideas. The other group of students with a lack of self-confidence was relatively more careful when they were using English. They were more willing to express themselves when they were working with their peers than when completing the learning tasks individually.

Given the situation of students with diverse abilities and characteristics, teachers explored some learning strategies to provide room for students to apply their critical thinking skills, to express their opinions using the vocabulary and language structures, and to develop their own thoughts and opinions on a topic. In addition, teachers aimed to develop a culture of self-learning so that students could take the initiative to learn beyond the classroom. As a result, the learning objectives were reviewed. Lesson observations and post-lesson discussions were also conducted to evaluate the learning process and outcomes.

Theoretical Framework

1. Elicit Higher-order Thinking of the Gifted

As suggested by Clasen and Bonk (1990), the strategy that creates the greatest impact on students' thinking is teachers' questioning. He stated that the level of students' thinking was directly proportional to the level of questions asked by the teachers. In other words, it was necessary for teachers to ask more effective questions in class. Savage (1998) pointed out that textbooks only offered minimum help to teachers during the learning and teaching process. Textbooks did not offer much room for students to develop their thinking beyond the basic information provided. It hindered the development of critical thinking because students were always asked to memorize the limited information provided. To encourage teachers to create an atmosphere which encouraged higher-level thinking, Savage (1998) mentioned that teachers had to entertain a range of views and go beyond textbook learning. There should be ways to increase discussion in the classroom and the group decision making process.

2. Catering for Learner Diversity and Learning Styles of the Gifted in a Language Classroom

Otto (2014) stated that even if students were gifted and talented in different fields, it was important for them to learn through differentiated learning strategies so that they could bring out their potential. It was necessary for teachers to consider students' past personal experiences and family cultural structures when they learnt a language (It is also true and important for all students, not limited to the gifted). Kaplan suggested that teaching English to gifted and talented

children requires having students see the benefit of discussing the same topic but from different perspectives (Kaplan, 1999). The purpose of the learning process has to be meaningful to students, and be relevant to their personal experiences and characteristics. To maximize the learning of the gifted learners, it is suggested teachers should avoid placing too much emphasis on correcting grammar and pronunciation which may discourage the students from speaking.

According to Heacox (2009), gifted learners have significant learning styles which are different from other average language learners. Gifted learners need more complex and advanced instructions. They seek opportunities to go beyond the essential skills and concepts. It is important for them to learn according to their learning needs, skills, talents, and abilities.

3. Oral Discourse for the Gifted

As stated by Allison (2002), debating is an intellectually exciting activity. Students not only learn to develop oral arguments through debating, they also develop their metacognitive skills because higher level thinking skills with the integration of thoughts and feelings will be involved in the experience. Through learning different terms in debating, they could be engaged in more challenging activities in the form of debating, for example, giving more persuasive messages. Expected major outcomes for students with higher ability will be their use of logical ordering techniques, and an increase in their skills of argument formulation.

Learning and Teaching Strategies

For the lesson planned after reviewing the learning needs of the students, a more student-centered approach would be adopted. The learning objectives were also reviewed. Besides merely achieving the essential skills, which involves describing the special features of an object verbally and expressing their opinions verbally with appropriate adjectives, students were also expected to set questions and give appropriate suggestions to enhance the situation, give creative ideas by giving suggestions based on the problem, realize that daily experiences are not for granted, and realize careful observation and planning could improve daily life. More opportunities were expected to be provided to students to discover knowledge, to think critically on their own, and to work collaboratively to develop a sense of ownership in their learning.

The strategies adopted in the lesson are summarized as follows:

1. Daily Life Experiences with Questioning

To build the connection between students' prior experiences and the learning process, a topic which was more relevant to their daily life, "Modes of Public Transport – How to Make Them Better", was chosen. At the beginning of the lesson, a picture of different cartoon characters taking different modes of transportation was shown to the students. With the picture, open-ended questions of different levels were presented. Students answered the questions by analyzing the facial expressions of the characters or giving their own interpretation of the hints given in the picture.

After introducing the basic information of different types of transport, students were expected to do field research on different modes of public transport found in Hong Kong. To develop a sense of ownership by providing options during the learning experience, students were allowed to choose which transport they would observe, based on their own interests, background, or personal experiences. Since teachers anticipated some students might have limited exposure to different modes of transport, students were encouraged to look for information on the internet, via Google Map, or through observation in their daily life. This enabled students to explore the topic by doing more through research on their own and to gain outside-classroom experience. After exploring the information about modes of transportation, including their history, features, routes, and fares, and gaining personal experience by riding on transport to visit different places in Hong Kong, students then chose the mode of public transport they preferred using the information collected.

2. Working Collaboratively through Heterogeneous Grouping but with Similar Interests

Students were then grouped according to the transport chosen. Grouping was done in terms of students' interests. Homogeneous groupings, but with students having different abilities, resulted. Allowing students to choose the mode of transport they would work on could be a great motivation for them. This could also create opportunities for students to communicate with their peers and help them develop appreciation of each other's strengths and empathy. Students were then expected to analyze the features of the transport chosen in groups. They then made suggestions on how the chosen transport could be enhanced. Exchanging ideas among peers could facilitate students to develop their own thoughts and opinions. After that, the group would give an oral presentation of the enhanced mode of the chosen transport to their peers.

3. “Challenge Time” with a Debating Activity

Peer evaluation could let students formulate and communicate constructive feedback on their peers' work and hence reflect on their own learning process. They were expected to gather and respond to the feedback on their own work. Instead of using the 13 HOTS diagrams as required, other methods, such as letting students set up questions to challenge their peers should also be adopted to suit students' interests and needs. As a result, an activity named “Challenge Time” was implemented. During “Challenge Time”, students were expected to set questions of different levels with factual questions, open-ended questions, or problem solving questions, to challenge their peers. After each group's presentation, students could ask questions which were closed-ended or open-ended in order to challenge the information given during the presentation. They may also give suggestions regarding the enhanced design of the mode of transport.

Discussion

1. Evidence of Learning

Lesson observation, by the teachers and the PDSSs team, was arranged as a way to uncover how students learned with the teacher's new approach giving facilitation and guidance. In the

lesson observed, most students demonstrated their higher-order thinking skills and creativity, together with their strong interest in the learning tasks. Students were motivated and demonstrated high initiative in participating in the lesson. They showed their excitement through their smiles, body language, and responses to the teacher's facilitation. Students were found unexpectedly engaged through their facial expression, with faces filled with wonder, active sharing and eager responses. It was found that grouping according to students' interests could be a means to help students develop appreciation of each other's strengths and empathy. This also built or reinforced good peer relationships within the classroom. Appropriate open-ended questions were given in a timely manner, allowing students to think more and deeper, i.e., effective scaffolding. From the enhanced design of the transportation, students demonstrated their critical thinking skills and grasp of details. For example, they realized that the bus might produce polluted air which causes damage to the Earth. They then suggested having a solar panel on top of the bus which provides more environmental-friendly solar energy to support the running of the bus. During the "Challenge Time" activity, good peer relationships among group members were displayed as students helped each other out to answer challenging questions. An unexpected evidence of learning was also exhibited, which was students' creativity. The product demonstrated students' creativity through their drawing, writing and verbal expression. Students were very excited, which could be seen from their behaviors, facial and verbal expressions, and their eagerness to participate in the "Challenge Time", and to act like lawyers.

2. Roles of Teachers

The lesson conducted was a great step forward. The teacher designed new learning tasks based on her understanding of her students, instead of using the textbook as the only reference. She tried implementing different learning tasks in her classroom while the same learning objectives were expected to be achieved. The new method of grouping her students based on students' own choices and interests was also applied.

To further facilitate the learning and maximize the strengths of students, and to unfold students' potential, the teacher applied the above mentioned strategies to students' daily learning so that the strategies could be refined, and students could get used to the learning approach and further develop their strengths in Level 1 whole-class classroom learning. The teacher also provided more facilitation to consolidate the learning experience of students after each learning task. Learning beyond the classroom was also encouraged from time to time so that students could relate their learning in school to their daily life experiences. The teacher became aware of students' body language reflecting learning behaviors-- e.g. faces filled with wonder, active sharing and eager responses.

3. Challenges and Suggestions

Regarding the value and use of different grouping strategies to address diverse student needs, interests and strengths, the teacher worried that some students, due to personality and/or language ability, may be left out if free grouping was allowed. This worry shows the sensitivity of the teacher

in using the appropriate teaching and learning strategy for his students. For an effective classroom, teachers need to strike a balance between providing free choices and achieving learning objectives within a certain timeline.

Teachers discovered that the core learning objectives could still be achieved even though the tasks were different and designed according to the abilities of different groups of students. They also realized that the grouping of students could be flexible, mostly based on the objectives of the learning tasks and the characteristics of the students. With reference to the learning evidence observed, in terms of students' body language and learning behaviors, teachers learnt more about the characteristics of their students. Students demonstrated different learning styles and interests. Some were keen on crafting, some demonstrated their talents in communicating with their peers, some were creative, and some were potential leaders.

Teachers might make use of these observations to gather further information about how the learning experiences of students could be enriched. Teachers also realized that, in order to unfold students' potential and strengths, they needed to cater for the diverse learning needs in Level 1 classroom learning. During the discussion, teachers mentioned that the engagement of students in using higher-order thinking skills and development of creativity could be further maximized, for example, by asking students to explain the rationale of setting questions to challenge their peers so that they could develop rules comprised of a spectrum of difficulties. To develop personal-social competence and enhance students' language skills in English, more opportunities could be provided for students to express themselves among peers during the lesson.

Furthermore, teachers realized that as long as they designed learning and teaching activities based on student needs, interests and strengths, they could engage their students to learn within and outside the classroom with enthusiasm and enjoyment. Teachers also recognized the effectiveness and advantages of developing a lesson based on students' interests and strengths. As shown by students' behavior, their task commitment in such an English Language lesson was strengthened.

Lastly, as a matter of fact, innovation and experiment by the teachers are major factors which enable students to learn further. Therefore, teachers should be given more room to reflect, grow, and be flexible during the learning and teaching process. On the other hand, professional development opportunities through collaborative lesson planning and seminars are essential for teachers to understand the concept and to develop the skills of running student-centered lessons with differentiated learning experiences in regular classrooms.