



賽馬會「知優致優」計劃

Jockey Club “Giftedness Into Flourishing Talents” Project

# Writing ‘Procedures’ of Producing Products

**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 and 1 lesson plan.**




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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# Writing 'Procedures' of Producing Products

**Grade: Primary 5**

**No. of Lessons (Learning Time): 5 Lessons (175 minutes in total)**

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| <b>Prior Knowledge</b>                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identification of different types of recycled materials (plastic / wood / cardboard / metal / glass / cloth)</li> <li>- Experience in writing procedures with action verbs (e.g. cut, paste, draw, etc.)</li> <li>- Working with peers</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Learning Objectives</b>                | <p><b>Knowledge</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students will be able to write the 'procedures' for the production of a piece of craft with vocabularies and language structures</li> <li>- Students describe the features of a piece of craft</li> </ul> <p><b>Skills</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students will generate creative ideas on the piece of craft which could be created with recycled materials</li> <li>- Students can demonstrate their higher-order thinking skills through giving comments and evaluating the output of their peers by identifying the features that they appreciate most and providing suggestions for improvement</li> <li>- Students can display their personal-social communication skills through working with their peers</li> </ul> <p><b>Values and Attitudes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students will enjoy the process of writing</li> </ul> |
| <b>Learning &amp; Teaching Strategies</b> | Drawing on Students' Daily-life Experiences, Peer Collaboration, Peer Feedback, Differentiation, Strength-based approach   |
| <b>Operation Mode of Gifted Education</b> | Level 1: School-based Whole-class Teaching   |
| <b>Core Elements of Gifted Education</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Higher-order Thinking Skills</li> <li> Creativity</li> <li> Personal-social Competence</li> </ul>   |

## Foreword / Background

Writing 'procedures' about producing a piece of craft with the appropriate language features is one of the suggested competencies regarding writing skills for students of Key Stage 2 in Hong Kong (Curriculum Development Council, 2017). In general, this writing skill is taught with a grammarian and teacher-centred approach in Hong Kong because it is believed that students may not be able to complete the writing task without explicit guidance from teachers. Students are expected to write with high accuracy instead of producing creative and enriched contents. After teachers' verbal explanation about the major features of the text type 'procedures' and introducing the use of connectives, for example, 'first', 'then', 'finally' with a presentation file, students are involved in an individual writing task, which is to write the procedures of producing a craft, with some given vocabulary items. The 'procedures' writings are then collected and graded by teachers after the whole class has experienced the same learning process with the same learning resources.

The target group of students involved in the following discussion is from one of the project schools of the Jockey Club "Gifted Into Flourishing Talents" Project (Project GIFT). Based on students' overall academic performance, the target group of students was allocated into 5 classes. The following discussion will focus on the higher-ability class, with students who usually perform well academically. The class could be divided into two major groups of students with different characteristics and learning needs. Type A consisted of a handful of English speakers with strong verbal fluency and accuracy in their use of English. From the daily observations by teachers, they could speak English confidently and fluently; their writing skills were comprehensive, which allowed them to write with high accuracy. Type B consisted of students who were second language learners, with limited self-confidence and reluctant to share a lot in class. They could handle the basic skills in English writing and complete the learning tasks given.

Based on the teacher-centred approach mentioned, and with observation in the past, teachers found that students produced extremely structured writings. When participating in the learning process, Type A students were found to be underachieving as there was a gap between their potential and their performance. They were unable to perform to their potential and were not motivated to produce high quality pieces of writing in the above writing task. Moreover, there was a lack of creativity in their written pieces. They merely completed the task without putting too much effort into generating creative ideas. They produced writings with the required number of words based on the structures and vocabulary items given. For Type B students, they were usually found passive in class and did not show much task commitment. They were able to write with basic skills, but they were anxious about participating in any writing tasks. It was observed that those students were only willing to write simple sentences and they showed more concerns about the number of words rather than the contents. They did not show much confidence in sharing their ideas through writing in general when they were required to use connectives and new vocabulary items.

## Objectives of Collaboration

To address the issues stated, the objectives of the collaboration would be raising students' engagement and their level of creativity. To enhance students' learning, teachers reviewed the causes of the situation and discussed how students could display their potential in the writing task. With the Professional Development and School Support (PDSS) Team of Project GIFT, teachers were first guided to analyse the behavior and characteristics of the students from their daily observations. They found that Type A students demonstrated creativity in some classroom speaking activities, for example, group discussion and role-play. They also showed their awareness of daily life issues through their conversations and opinions given in class. On the other hand, Type B students, who did not show much willingness to share individually, became more willing to share among peers during group learning tasks. They also had a strong interest in handicraft.

Given students' diverse abilities and characteristics among the two groups of students, teachers explored some strategies to raise the engagement of all students in the writing task, in addition to fostering the creativity of Type A students and minimizing the anxiety of Type B students so that they would be more willing to elaborate their ideas in their writing. As a result, teachers of the school designed five consecutive lessons of whole-class learning experience through collaborative lesson planning and discussion. Lesson observations and post-lesson discussions were also conducted to evaluate the learning process and outcomes. The learning objectives and process of the selected class would be modified and tailored based on the learning needs and characteristics of the students. It was expected Type A students would share their skills, knowledge, and show engagement in the learning process and Type B students will be more willing to participate in writing tasks.

## Theoretical Framework

### 1. Responding to Students' Readiness, Learning Styles, and Interests

Students have different levels of readiness, learning styles, and interests. To meet the diverse learning needs of the students in whole-class teaching, including those with higher ability in English Language, and students with limited confidence in English Language, the approach of differentiation could be adopted. With reference to Tomlinson and Hockett (2008), differentiation means using multiple ways to run through the learning process through differentiated learning strategies and content. Every student learns at their own level of readiness and interests.

To engage students with limited confidence, learning strategies could be designed with a strength-based approach. According to the Theory of Multiple Intelligences (Gardner, 1983), there are eight intelligences embedded in the human mind, namely linguistic, logical/mathematical, visual/spatial, musical, bodily kinesthetic, intrapersonal, interpersonal, and naturalist intelligences. If the students are allowed to learn according to their own strengths and learning styles, not merely the engagement of the students will be raised, their ability in English Language could also be enhanced.

## 2. Meaningful Learning with Extension for the Gifted

According to different studies, highly-able students could be engaged in learning if the process is meaningful with extension from the standard curriculum. Jarvis (2010) stated that many gifted students felt frustrated when they were not learning with relevant experiences. They might not be willing to participate in learning tasks which did not match their interests or abilities. Fehrenbach (1993) summarized that gifted students could not display their potential due to the limited learning contents and lack of extended learning opportunities. As a result, they could not be involved in school experiences which are meaningful to them. Extension of learning contents beyond the standard curriculum and dynamic learning activities are necessary for stimulating highly-able students to achieve a higher quality learning result. As suggested by Ganopole (1988), to engage students in the writing process, students should be encouraged to focus on constructing the meaning of the piece. In other words, more concentration should be put on the expression of ideas before focusing on the accuracy of grammar items. Swan (2005) also mentioned that a wide variety of options for the topics of the writing activities could take students' interest into account and students could gain a sense of ownership. When students are allowed to make choices, they would develop their own interests in literacy (Turner & Paris, 1995).

## 3. Fostering Creativity of Highly Able Students

An open and welcoming environment is important for developing students' creativity. It was found that highly creative students experienced difficulty in traditional school environments (Amabile, 1989). Gifted students and highly-able students who love to generate ideas, play with words or ideas, are usually being overlooked in the writing classroom (Rollison, 2005). They become unmotivated and underachieving with a teacher-centered approach which focuses more on accuracy instead of content and meaning. To bolster their creativity, this group of students needs to experience challenging learning that is relevant to them (Csikzentmihalyi, 1988). Whitmore (1980) found that creative children achieved a higher standard learning outcome when the learning environment was less restrictive. Cropley (1995) stated that teachers who used a more cooperative style of learning, which involves inspiring students' divergent thinking and promoting students' self-evaluation, could foster the development of creativity in the classroom.

## 4. Learning Facilitated by Peer Collaboration

With a more interactive and supportive environment, students could achieve a better learning output through collaboration. Graham, McKeown, Kiuhare, and Harris (2012) recommended that peer collaboration influenced students' achievement in writing. According to Rollison (2005), writers need audience. To engage students in the learning process, opportunities should be given to students to share their works among their peers. When there is a target audience, students become more positive toward writing. Throughout the writing process, ideas are shared among peers (Collins & Parkhurst, 1996). The underachieving students could develop the motivation to engage in the learning process because they could gain encouragement and support from their peers to work on a piece with high standards.

## Learning and Teaching Strategies

Over the course of the learning process of the 5 consecutive lessons, a more student-centered approach was adopted. The learning objectives were identified as follows: Besides merely writing the procedures with the target vocabulary items and connectives, students were expected to generate creative ideas on the content of the writing pieces by describing the features of the piece of craft. Also, they were expected to give comments and evaluate the output of their peers by identifying the most appreciated elements and provide suggestions for further improvement. All of them would enjoy and be engaged in the process of writing through collaborating with their peers. Creativity of Type A students could be fostered while the anxiety of Type B students could be minimized.

To achieve the learning objectives and engage students in the writing task, the following strategies were adopted:

### 1. Learning Styles, Readiness and Interests - Differentiation

Basically, all students were expected to proceed from peer discussion to the production of a piece of craft in groups, sharing the 'procedures' verbally by using the target sentence structures and vocabulary items, and giving comments or suggestions based on others' sharing. To cater for the diverse learning needs, a differentiated process was implemented throughout the unit. During group discussion, Type A students were expected to give a brief elaboration of their own opinions. After that, students joined in groups and had their roles assigned within groups based on their own strengths. Clear instruction and guidance from the teacher enabled each member to recognize their relative strengths in their group. Type B students who showed more interest in handicrafts would focus more on the production process, while Type A students would generate more creative ideas on the features and work on the descriptions of the procedures. During the sharing, Type B students would share the procedures and the features of the products. In order to win a vote from their peers in the last session of the unit, Type A students would need to promote their products to the audience with persuasive statements.

To motivate both groups of students, students of Type A were encouraged to show their talents by providing more room for them to make their own decision, for example, they could choose the functions and the types of resources they would like to use. They were also responsible for leading their team to complete the task. For Type B students, they were allowed to pick their own roles in their groups. They could choose to illustrate the products, describe the 'procedures' of making the products, be involved in the production process, or share the products with their peers. More importantly, it would be their own choice in which part of making the product they wanted to join. They were encouraged to complete the task within their groups according to their own strengths.

### 2. Meaningful Learning - Drawing on Students' Daily Life Experiences

To bridge the connection between the learning content of the writing task and students' characteristics and experience, the focus of the writing task would be on the development of a

creative content instead of putting too much concentration on the explanation of the grammar items. A theme which was more relevant to students' daily life – “being environmentally friendly” was then chosen because students have a strong awareness of daily life issues. At the beginning of the unit, students were asked to bring a piece or a picture of a disposed object that they discarded in their daily life back to the classroom. They would then learn about different vocabulary items, including types of disposed objects and types of materials through a wide range of learning resources, including videos and pictures. After that, they would be guided to find out the values of some specific kinds of disposed objects and experience the production of a piece of craft using the disposed objects. Hence, students were given the mission to write the procedures of the production process. This could then create an opportunity for them to write about their own experiences and ideas. Besides writing the procedures, students also had to describe the features of the piece of craft in their writing.

### 3. Learning with Extension – Pre-writing

To provide more opportunities and time for Type A students to generate their own ideas and explore relevant options, different pre-writing activities were implemented. According to Rollison (2005), prewriting provides time and opportunities for students to collect information about what to write. The stage of pre-writing in the discussed unit consumed more than half the time of the unit. All students were involved in different levels of prewriting activities, which could be arranged any time before the actual writing process. For Type A students, they were involved in a range of challenging activities such as interviewing, categorizing, and classifying ideas, which could help them generate ideas and analyse the quality of different recycled products; while Type B students were involved in searching different illustrations of different products made with recycled materials and different vocabulary items which could be used.

### 4. Promoting Students' Creativity – Open and Welcoming Environment

To allow students to exhibit their creativity throughout the learning process, the teacher developed an open and welcoming learning environment with a student-centered approach. Teachers provided more choices and resources which were relevant to students' daily life experiences. Students were given sufficient time to brainstorm and they were encouraged to express their ideas in different ways. These activities helped inspire students' divergent thinking. They were also involved in giving comments and making suggestions to their peers at the end of the lesson.

### 5. Personal-social Learning Facilitation – Peer Collaboration and Feedback

To provide a more interactive and dynamic environment for students to stimulate their motivation and creativity, students were engaged in collaborative learning during the writing task. Students formed their own groups based on common interests, so students in each group were of heterogeneous abilities. Collaborative learning could help students generate more creative ideas and demonstrate engagement throughout the process. Putting together their collaborative efforts, Type A students could flourish further while Type B students could immerse themselves in the



English Language environment and thus be more receptive to the appreciation of the language in reading, writing, listening and speaking.

To further provide encouragement and support for students to achieve a result of a higher standard, students were provided opportunities to share their products, both the 'procedure writings' and the recycled products, to their peers as audience at the end of the unit. As mentioned by Rollison (2005), a responsive 'real' audience would let the writer know if his/her message was effective. After students shared their products, their peers provided feedback according to the uniqueness, usefulness, and the level of attractiveness of the products. Audience would be given the opportunity to vote for the best products among all groups.

## Discussion

### 1. Evidence of Learning

Throughout the learning process of the unit, evidence of learning was observed. All students were engaged during the learning process. Positive attitudes and task commitment of all students were observed in their discussion during the group learning tasks, as well as their willingness to give feedback to each other. They enjoyed the learning process a lot given their laughter as evidence. Type B students showed smiles on their faces when they listened and shared their ideas with their peers. Their confidence was enhanced given that they actively shared their ideas during group discussion and presentations were done with eye contact. They were able to write and tell the 'procedures' of creating the products during presentations. They mentioned the steps with appropriate connectives such as 'then', and 'finally'. They listened carefully to and concentrated on listening to their peers' sharing. For Type A students, they brought in vocabulary items on the types of materials which could be recycled other than items stated in the textbook, for example, terms for different fabrics. They would also look for more recycling ideas from the internet or news articles when they prepared the content for writing the 'procedures' During peer evaluation, they were able to give meaningful and effective feedback to their peers with reasons provided, for example, suggesting using some more stable items for making the craft in order to make it more long-lasting. Together with their rich imagination, they were able to display and exhibit their talents and potential in English Language writing and speaking throughout the learning process. This learning experience could be a good opportunity for them to extend their potential and creativity in English writing. The learning experience was thus designed with a combination of students' choices of materials in open-ended activities with opportunities for production, which were important for highly-able or gifted students like Type A students.

There were unexpected performances and outcomes displayed by the students. All students exhibited their great creativity by showing some products created with specific functions and features. Though some products were not well-made, the ideas behind them were quite innovative. Most students developed the ideas of the pieces of craft based on their own interests and some products involved games in nature. For example, there was a game involving the use of consumed

paper, plastic bottles and string. According to the students, the purpose of the game was to train players' hand-eye coordination and physical strength. A lot of classmates enjoyed playing their game. Some products had significant meanings as they could be gifts for family members or friends on special occasions. Students also demonstrated other talents throughout the learning process. One product stood out as being excellent in craftsmanship and marketability. It was a clock made out of old clothes, with movable arms intended for multiple purposes: 1. as a cushion, 2. as a pacifier/comforter for babies and, 3. as a clock for young children to learn about time. Type A students could provide detailed descriptions and elaboration on how the product was made and explain the concept (e.g. the color theme, reasons for making) behind it clearly. Moreover, they showed their strong critical thinking skills when they were giving feedback to their peers. They made constructive feedback based on the structure, materials, and functions of the products. At the same time, Type B students were able to talk about their own ideas with their group members. Those who were good at making handicrafts illustrated their ideas in detail through drawing the process of making the products. They became more willing to participate in the learning process. In sum, this entire learning process provided opportunities for students with different interests and strengths to excel and participate.

## 2. Roles of Teachers

Taking into consideration different students in different classrooms and learning needs of the students, the teacher became more flexible in facilitating the learning process through taking up different roles. She fine-tuned her facilitation by providing different levels of guidance and support through using different levels of questions or printed notes for different groups that progressed at different paces. She had also created a learning-promotive classroom with different workstations along the sides and a semicircle of audience seating in the middle. With these workstations, she helped facilitate peer group discussion, while the semicircle seating divided clearly the two areas and roles of presenters and audience to enhance attention on product presentations. After group presentations, she strengthened students' motivation to pitch their work through verbal presentations with explanations to an authentic 'audience'. She arranged a time for peer evaluation by displaying the product of each group on separate tables. She also created an interactive environment with lots of opportunities for students to share their ideas. Type A students could stretch their language potential in terms of lexicon, syntax, and pragmatics, while Type B students were immersed in an English-rich environment with the opportunity to appreciate the language input, e.g. persuasive and elaborative skills.

## 3. Challenges and Suggestions

After designing a continuum unit of learning experiences using the student-centered approach, as well as with the infusion of the 3 core elements of gifted education, namely higher-order thinking skills, creativity and personal-social competence and differentiated strategies, teachers were impressed by the evidence of learning displayed by the students, especially the creativity shown by some students who had not shown much engagement in English Language learning in the past.

Before the lesson, teachers spent a comparatively longer time on planning the learning process in a way that they were not used to. Sometimes, it is challenging for the teachers to modify their ways of teaching and accept the new approach suggested. They could only find it worthwhile if the abilities and attitude of all students were strengthened. In order to sustain the practices, teachers were suggested and encouraged to get into the habit of infusing the 3 core elements of gifted education and differentiated strategies into students' learning. They were also encouraged to let students learn beyond the textbooks so that students with higher ability and stronger interest in English Language (Type A students) could be exposed to a wider range of linguistic items with broadened aspects to appreciate language arts. Since the approach used is new to the teachers, a learning community among teachers can facilitate the sharing of experiences among teachers and this can be a great opportunity for teachers to develop their skills through peer lesson observation and post lesson discussion. More time should be given to teachers for discussion on the characteristics of their students, the design of the lessons, and the exchange of ideas on different strategies to bring the best out of every student.