Paving the way for the NSS

English teachers at our school started preparation work last year. From September 2006 to now, our English Department collaborated with the Language Learning Support Section of the Education Bureau on a school-based initiative entitled "Project on Social Issues for Thinking and Debating". This was a pilot project with an aim to prepare our secondary-one students for the New Senior English Curriculum.

We saw a need for exposing students to not just language arts components but also non-language arts components and integrated non-language arts components coherently in the whole year plan. After reviewing the school-based English curriculum, we incorporated social issues, newspaper articles and language arts texts on interesting issues systematically into task-based modules. We then made use of social issues to develop basic thinking skills (e.g. classifying ideas, identifying causal relationships, etc.) and debating skills (e.g. giving arguments and counter-arguments for a standpoint, appropriate tone of voice, etc.) for enhancing writing and speaking respectively.   Through such a curriculum initiative, English teachers would also like to achieve the following:

◆ Develop a coherent and balanced school-based English language curriculum at junior secondary level by coherently integrating non-language arts components into task-based modules to help students build a solid foundation for the new senior secondary English language curriculum
◆ Develop students' thinking skills for writing and debating skills for speaking
◆ Develop teachers' capacity as effective curriculum designers and leaders

English teachers of our school will extend the curriculum initiative from S1 to other levels and integrate non-language arts components into the whole-year plans at junior secondary level.   It is hoped that after systematic cross-level curriculum mapping, students can have a balanced development in different aspects and build a firm foundation for the new senior secondary English language curriculum.   The experiences gained this year can serve as reference for other English teachers to develop a coherent and balanced school-based English language curriculum.   Our school has also joined the network formed by participating schools in the *Project on Social Issues for Thinking and Debating* and may be able to generate useful knowledge for other schools interested in using social issues and debating in English lessons in the future.   Here are the details of the project for both S. 1 and S.2:

Project on Social Issues for Thinking and Debating 2006-2007

I.   Details of the Project

Project Content

● Integrating social issues into task-based modules

Project on Social Issues for Thinking and Debating

Strategies adopted

- Moving from issues to social issues
- Language arts activities and texts to motivate students to learn social issues
- Current news and newspaper articles to enrich students' world knowledge
- Mini-debates and oral discussions to explore social issues and learn reasoning skills

Level

- S1 (S2 will also select related issues to be included in the task-based modules)

II.   Objectives to be achieved:

1. To develop students' basic thinking and debating skills using social issues as an entry point
2. To extend students' learning of task-based modules by enriching their world knowledge

III.   Whole-year curriculum planning for S1 (2006-2007)

Theme-based issues / social issues	Task-based modules (adapted from Longman Target English)	Text-types	Thinking skills	Debating Skills	Activities	Learning products
1. Goal Setting - Planning Ahead for My Life	1. Managing My Life Unit: At School Unit: In My Free	-Fables	- To identify causal relationships (e.g. causes and consequences, etc.)	- To understand more than one point of view in a situation -To give supporting	-Read selected fables (traditional & modern versions) -Understand some causal relationships and points of view with teachers' demonstration and teaching -Complete mind-maps on components of fables and those on	-Role-plays -Fables

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				reasons for one's standpoint	causal relationships -Perform a role-play in which students play different animals in the fable with two opposing points of view and show the consequences of some good and bad actions -Write a fable to show positive moral values -With insights from the fables, set goals for oneself with supporting reasons.	
	Time					
2. School Bullying	2. Key to Getting Along with Others – Respect (created material)	-Comics -News reports -Screenplays	-To identify causes and consequences -To suggest creative solutions for bullying	-To use an appropriate tone of voice to present points from a standpoint -To adopt more than one point of view	-Watch a short film produced by students on bullying and discuss classmates' personal experiences in being bullied. Identify bullying behaviours and related words using the screenplay and the film. -Read short newspaper articles on bullying. Learn the related vocabulary and discuss the consequences of bullying. -Get to know the different parties (e.g. the bully, the bullied, bystanders, teachers, etc.) and points of view involved in bullying. -Do a role-play in the form of a mini-debate and give points from different perspectives to show causes and consequences of bullying. -Read different comic strips on the social issue "Bullying" -Create a new ending for the comics. Invite comments from peers and present the comic strips in class.	-Role-plays (in the form of mini-debates) -Comic strips -News article
3. Stealing for Money - Is Money	3. Enjoying Life Unit: Shopping (Unit: Holidays	-News reports -Stories	-To identify and analyse causes and consequences	-To use an appropriate tone of voice and facial expressions to create	-As a lead-in activity, read a scenario on stealing money in which a dilemma is found. Brainstorm ideas for causes, reasons and consequences and classify it them accordingly.	-Drama -Discussions

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Everything to You?	in Japan -optional)	-Plays		the desired effects -To give supporting reasons for an argument	-In groups, discuss a scenario and the action to take. Analyse the causes, reasons and consequences. -Read news reports on shoplifting for money. Discuss reasons for shoplifting and possible consequences in groups with teachers' demonstration. -Learn basic components in a drama. -Adopt different roles (e.g. a juvenile delinquent, his/her parent, friends, teacher and school principal, etc.). Write a short playscript in which each role has to present his/her point of view. Act it out in class.	
4. Charity – Helping Those Suffering From Natural Disasters	4. Let's Celebrate Together	-Songs (including Christmas songs) -Tables / charts	-To classify and analyse causes and consequences -To suggest creative solutions	-To use basic persuasive skills (e.g. supporting figures, appropriate tone of voice, reasons, etc.) to convince different parties -To apply basic research skills to collect information	- Get to know different types of natural disasters that cause human suffering and some supporting facts /figures. Listen to the first song. Express feelings about the song. - Listen to another song. Bring out the importance of compassion and empathy. -Form into groups with each group representing a charitable organization that does community services. Collect related information (e.g. figures, supporting reasons) and use it to persuade (e.g. 1-min or 2-min presentations, etc.) others. -Choose a song in each group that shows the message of the organisation and sing together.	- Songs -Short speeches / oral presentations to persuade people
5. TV Commercials – Believe it or	5. Eating Out	-Advertise -ments	–To judge the validity of statements based on factual evidence	-To put forward arguments for pointing out false or exaggerated	-Watch TV commercials and read magazine advertisements. -Distinguish between true and false statements in advertisements with teachers' demonstration & teaching.	-advertise- ments -Role-plays (in

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			and sufficiency and relevance of the points given - To identify "obvious" fallacies with supporting reasons (e.g. lack of evidence, sufficiency and relevance of the points given, etc.)	statements with supporting reasons –To voice out one's opinions in public	-Discuss in groups whether the claims in the advertisements are true or not and give supporting reasons. -Adopt different points of view: e.g. cunning businessmen wanting to promote their products, representatives from the Green organization or charitable organizations, smart consumers who are good at identifying fallacies in adverttisements. - Produce simple advertisements to promote products or educate the public and invite other classmates to identify false statements using rubrics.	the form of mini-debates)
6. Cruelty to Animals - "Master, Please Do Not Dump Me"	6. Animals – Love Vs Cruelty (created material)	-Poems -Newspaper articles	-To identify fallacies in arguments with supporting reasons -To view issues from different points of view	-To apply persuasive skills learned -To give arguments and counter-arguments in given situations	-Read some animal poems and get to know the special features of those poems (e.g. alliteration, imagery, etc). -Adopt the role of a master and that of a pet and put forward arguments for abandoning pets on the street in groups. -Present the arguments in class. -Write animal poems in groups to show positive values.	-Poems -Informal mini-debates

IV. Expected learning outcomes for junior secondary education (S1-S3) in the development of students' thinking and debating skills

1. Students can apply some of the following principles for judging the validity of statements or for identifying "obvious" fallacies:

- Relevance of the arguments
- Consistency of the arguments
- Sufficiency of the supporting reasons given in the arguments
- Making wrong assumptions

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2. Students can identify key words in statements and classify them into some basic categories:

1. Categories of key words/phrases (e.g. values, opinion, fact, concept, etc.)
2. Clarity of meaning in the given contexts (e.g. ambiguity in meaning, more than one meaning possible, etc.)

3. Students can display ability to use divergent thinking

1. To be open to different possibilities
2. To include more points of view
3. To collect information from various sources

4. To brainstorm as many ideas, opinions and facts as possible

4. Students can display ability to use convergent thinking (ability to make different judgements based on sound reasoning)

1. To choose the best option with available information and constraints
2. To make ethical judgements by considering different values, factors, consequences, etc.
3. To solve dilemmas by choosing options that are based on an evaluation of pros and cons

Project on Social Issues for Thinking and Debating 2007-2008

IV.   Details of the Project

Project

Social Issues for Thinking and Debating – Phase II

Project on Social Issues for Thinking and Debating

Approaches and Strategies

- Integrating social issues into task-based modules
- In-depth discussion of social issues from different perspectives
- Language arts activities and texts to motivate students to learn social issues
- Current news and newspaper articles to enrich students' world knowledge
- Mini-projects, oral discussions and debating activities to explore social issues and learn reasoning skills

Level

- S2

V. Objectives to be achieved

- To use social issues to develop students' thinking skills for writing
- To use social issues to develop students' debating skills for speaking
- To extend students' learning of task-based modules by enriching their world knowledge

VI. Whole-year curriculum planning for S2 (2007-2008)

Units	Modules	Text-types	Thinking skills	Debating Skills	Activities	Learning Products
1. At the movies (adapted from "At the Movies" JS 2A)	Leisure and Entertainment	- Screenplays	N/A	N/A	*(Activities mainly adapted from the textbook)* -Get to know different types of movies and the Universal Studios in (pg. 26). -Watch an episode of a movie (e.g. Superman) and learn play components by using film data cards and organisers (Inter-sch Mini-Oscar).	- Film review - Mini-drama - Storyboard (optional)

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					- Read some lines taken from a screenplay and learn stage directions. Learn prepositions of movement and talk about the actions in it. - Learn reported speech and discuss in pairs /groups the most impressive lines said by the actors/actresses say in the screenplay - Create a storyboard (optional) based on examples given. - Act out some of the lines of a script based on the storyboard created and learn intonation, etc. -Read film reviews (textbk + Edcity) and lean useful adjectives for describing films. - Write a movie review based on the template of a textbook (p.28)	
2. Places for Leisure and Entertainment - Preservation Vs Redevelopment (adapted from "Shop till You Drop" JS 2A)	Leisure and Entertainment	- News reports - Research articles - Columns	- To identify and analyse pros, and cons, causes and consequences - To give valid evidence and examples to support the arguments	- To use an appropriate tone of voice and facial expressions to create the desired effects - To give supporting reasons for an argument	- Get to know some modern shopping malls and their features (pp.2-7). - Compare them with some "traditional" places for shopping (e.g. Sneaker Street) by looking at pictures in the PowerPoint or reflecting on personal experiences. Learn comparative and superlative adjectives. - Organise ideas and thoughts using conceptual frameworks and learn related linguistic features. - Read articles, highlight and identify the perspectives, facts, pros, cons, feelings, causes etc. in them - Form into 4 groups and adopt different perspectives (e.g. those of residents, shop owners, the Government and consumers) - Discuss other points and complete the table given by the teacher - Familiarize with the rubrics of public speaking and presentation skills - Present the points and ideas in class and answer questions raised by	- Discussion - Role play (mini-documentary) - Letter to the Editor

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					other groups - Prepare for the mini-documentary from different perspectives (about 3 to 4 minutes) - Write a letter to the Editor and present arguments for or against the redevelopment of Sneakers' Street	
3. Sensationalism and paparazzi (adapted from JS 2A "Role Model")	Inside Stories about People in the World	- Newspaper articles - Biography - News reports - Magazines - Blogs	-To distinguish between facts and myths with supporting reasons	- To use an appropriate tone of voice to present points - To adopt more than one point of views	- The teacher gives students some pieces of news about their classmate and asks them which one is true. - The teacher helps students find out the sensational elements or the fake elements in the news. - The teacher asks student to find one piece of entertainment news from local newspapers and show in what way the report is sensational or fake - Students are asked to share their feelings or reflections towards the sensational news. - The students discuss the impact of the sensational news and faked news under the guidance of the teacher	- Discussions - sharing

4. The problem of addiction (adapted from JS 2B "Modern Life" & and "Fashion")	Inside Stories about People in the World	- Newspaper articles - Posters	-To classify and analyse causes and consequences -To suggest creative solutions	-To use basic persuasive skills (e.g. supporting figures, appropriate tone of voice, reasons, etc.) to convince different parties -To apply basic research skills to collect information	- Students get to know the seriousness of online addiction in Hong Kong by reading newspaper and watching video clips - Students are formed into groups and do some research on the topics including popular drugs in Hong Kong, shopholic, cosmetics, etc. - Each group has to do a presentation on different varieties of drugs - Each group stages a presentation in the morning to persuade students not to take drugs	- Reports -Short speeches / oral presentations to persuade people - Debate
5.Global warming	JS 2B The environment	- Newspaper articles - TV news reports - Songs - Movies	- To include different points of view - To learn how to collect information - To make conclusions based on different sources of information	- To understand more than one point of view in a situation -To give supporting reasons and evidence for one's standpoint	- Students listen to some songs about global warming using Live Earth - Students read selected newspaper articles - Students are trained to understand some causal relationships and points of view with teachers' demonstration and teaching - Students complete mind-maps on the causes of global warming - Students need to perform a mini-discussion on how to tackle the problem of global warming (publicity) - Students have to write a song to encourage people to save energy - Students set some measures to reduce global warming - Survey/ fact sheets / questionnaire will be used - Role-play: people from different places show the impacts of global warming	- Role-plays - Presentation - Songs

IV. Expected learning outcomes for junior secondary education (S1-S3) in the development of students' thinking and debating skills

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- Consistency of the arguments
- Sufficiency of the supporting reasons given in the arguments
- Making wrong assumptions

2. Students can identify the key words in statements and classify them into some basic categories:
- Categories of key words/ phrases (e.g. values, opinion, fact, concept, etc.)
- Clarity of meaning in the given contexts (e.g. ambiguity in meaning, more than one meaning possible, etc.)

3. Students can display their ability to use divergent thinking
- To be open to different possibilities
- To include more points of view
- To collect information from various sources

4. Students are trained to brainstorm and express ideas, opinions and facts as many as possible

5. Students can display their ability to use convergent thinking (the ability to make different judgements based on sound reasoning)
1. To choose the best option with constraints and available information
2. To make ethical judgements by considering different values, factors, consequences, etc.
3. To solve dilemmas by choosing options which are based on the evaluation of pros and cons