

Introducing Letter Sounds to Children in Meaningful Contexts

St Peter's Catholic Kindergarten

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St Peter's Catholic Kindergarten



Opportunity/Problem identified in exposing children to letter sounds

- **K1 story books:**

- How to introduce letter sounds of isolated words?
- How to create a story to help children retain what they have learned?
- How to introduce other word examples as the story books provided only one word example of each target letter sound?

- **K2 and K3 story books:**

- When can the children apply their knowledge of letter sounds if the learning focus was mainly on the vocabularies and sentences?

Objectives of the case study

- Teachers reviewed their school English language plan and suggested to introduce the letter sounds through **K2 and K3 storybooks**. The objectives were to
 - provide **a more meaningful context** for children to learn letter sounds
 - provide **more word examples** for children to understand how they can transfer the phonics knowledge in new situation
 - **consolidate** children's knowledge of letter-sound relationship **in a fun way**

Work plan

- Tryout Period: **Apr 2009 – Apr 2010**
- Teachers involved: **Two project teachers**
- Classes involved: **K2 and K3 classes**
- Strategies adopted: **Shared Reading and Storytelling**



Implementation

- Teachers introduced
 - 14 letter sounds through **Shared Reading**
(Materials: the **core story books**, Caterpillar Series)
 - 2 letter sounds through **Storytelling**
(Materials: SKEL team's pilot **Max's Adventure – English Letter Story Series**)
- Teachers reinforced the letter sounds through **songs, games, art and craft and real-life experience activities**

2009/10 K2 English plan

1st Term		2nd Term	
Book Title	Letter sound and word examples	Book Title	Letter sound and word examples
<i>The Zoo</i>	/	<i>The Picnic</i>	/d/ (juice, jam, jelly) /s/ (sausages, salad)
<i>Off To School</i>	/k/ (cup, coat) /b/ (bag, book, box)	<i>Happy Easter</i>	/h/ (how, happy) /l/ (let's, long)
<i>Baby Ben</i>	/b/ (baby, ben)	<i>Dressing Up</i>	/f/ (fun, fireman)
<i>Ho! Ho! Ho!</i>	/j/ (you, yo-yo)	<i>Water Everywhere</i>	/w/ (water, window)
<i>The Double-decker Bus</i>	/t/ (to, top)		
<i>What's that sound?</i>	/n/ (not, no) /b/ (baby, boom-ba)		

Total: 16 letter sounds (K2 and K3)

Letter sounds in black: Introduced through shared reading activities of the core series of story books

Letter sounds in grey: Reinforced through shared reading activities of the core series of story books

2009/10 K3 English plan

1 st Term		2 nd Term	
Book Title	Letter sound and word examples	Book Title	Letter sound and word examples
<i>I Can</i>	/t/ (turn, to, today) /h/ (hop, head)	<i>Into Town</i>	/m/ (motor, mothers) /b/ (bicycle, bell)
<i>The Parade</i>	/b/ (boy, bell) /p/ (piggy, people) /g/ (go, girl)	<i>Popcorn is popping!</i>	/p/ (popcorn, popping)
<i>The Mouse And The Giraffe</i>	/ks/ (box, ox) /g/ (goat, got)	<i>Spring Is Here</i>	/k/ (come , coat)
<i>The Salad</i>	/s/ (salad, sauce, some)	<i>Down In The Sea</i>	/s/ (sea, see) /d/ (dolphin, dancing, down) /l/ (little, long, looking)
<i>Max likes marshmallows</i>	/m/ (Max, marshmallows)	<i>What A Very Hot Day!</i>	/dʒ/ (jelly, juice)

Total: 16 letter sounds (K2 and K3)

Letter sounds in black: Introduced through shared reading activities of the core series of story books

Letter sounds in grey: Reinforced through shared reading activities of the core series of story books

Letter sounds in blue: Introduced through storytelling activities (English Letter Story Series)

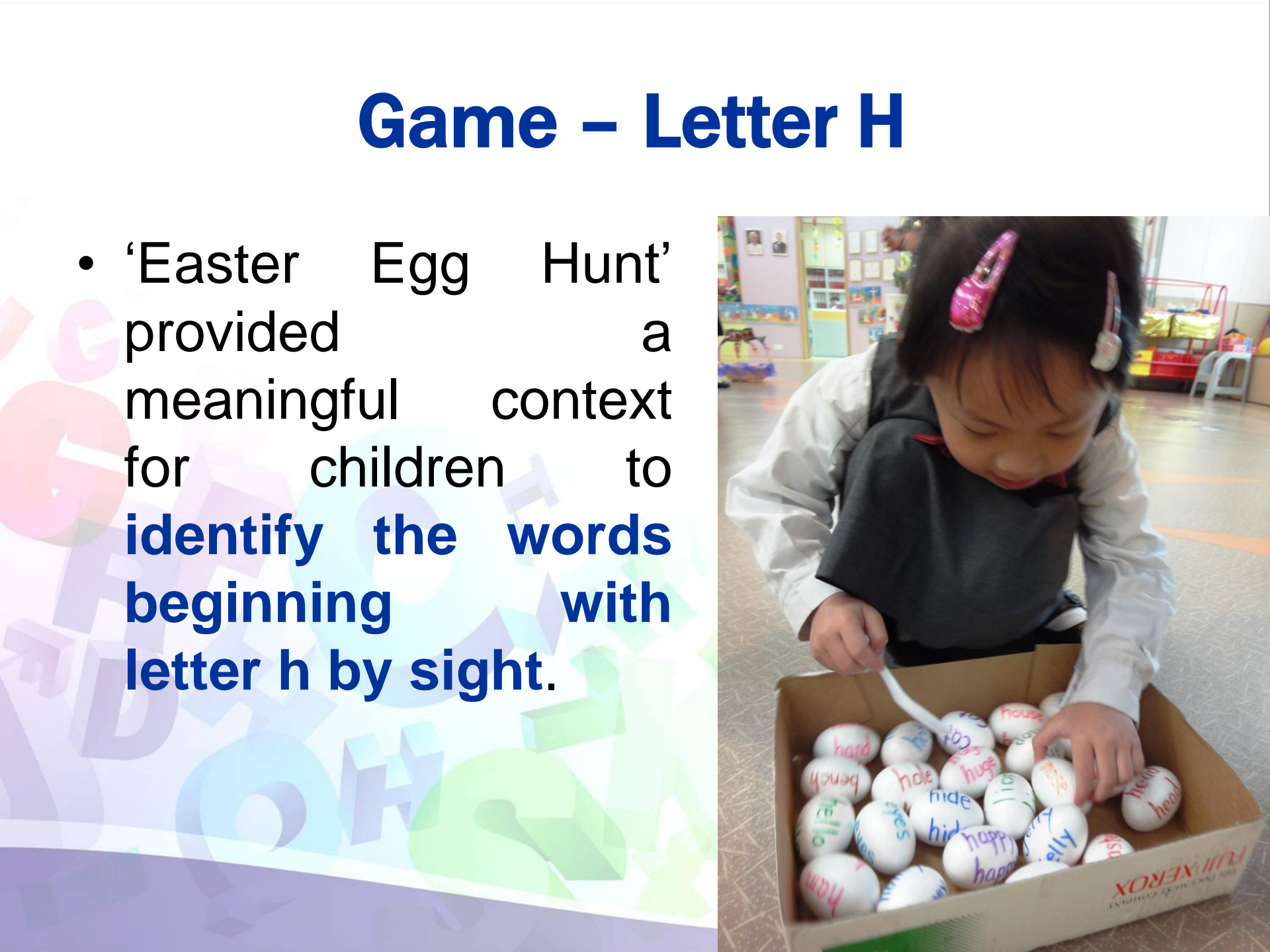
Shared reading activity – Letter H



Class Level: K2
Book Title: **Happy Easter**

[illegible]

- [illegible]



Game – Letter H



Game – Letter H

- ◆ Children were prompted to **say the words beginning with letter h together** when checking the answers.



Shared reading activity – Letter C



Class Level: **K3**
Book Title: **Spring is Here**

Game – Letter C



- ◆ It provided ample chances for children to **say the target letter sound in context.**



Shared reading activities

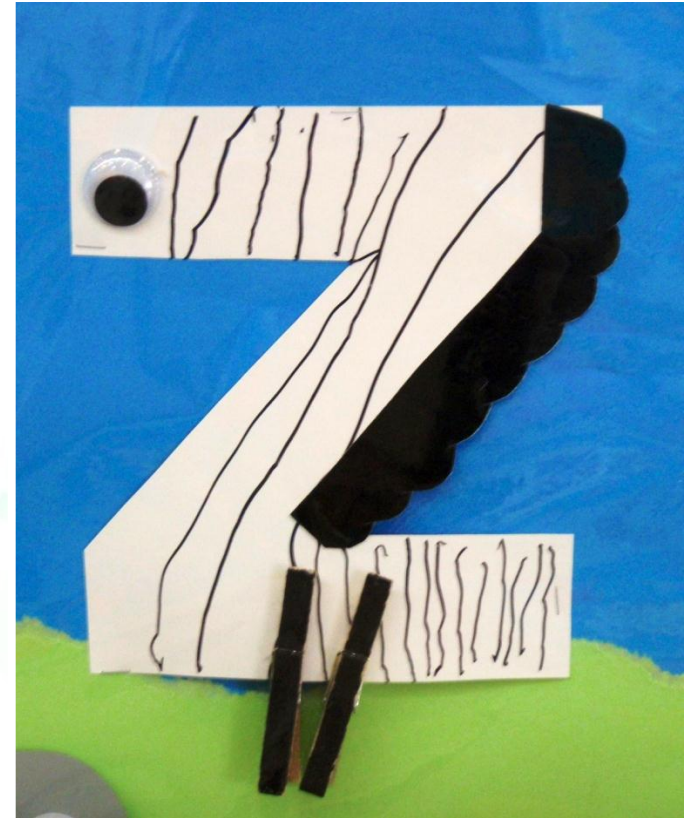
- Teachers brought children's attention to the **word examples** in the texts.



- ◆ Teachers guided children to identify and name the **beginning letters**.
- ◆ Teachers introduced the **letter sounds** and helped children develop the concept of **letter-sound correspondence**.

Art and craft activities

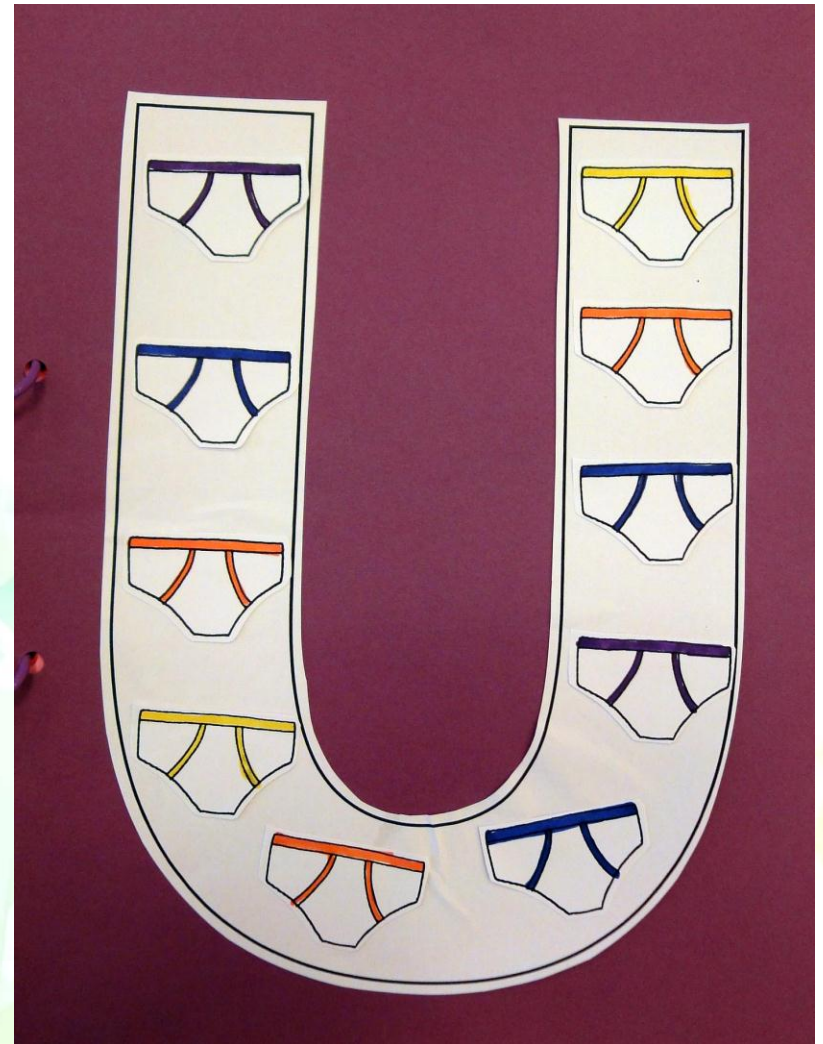
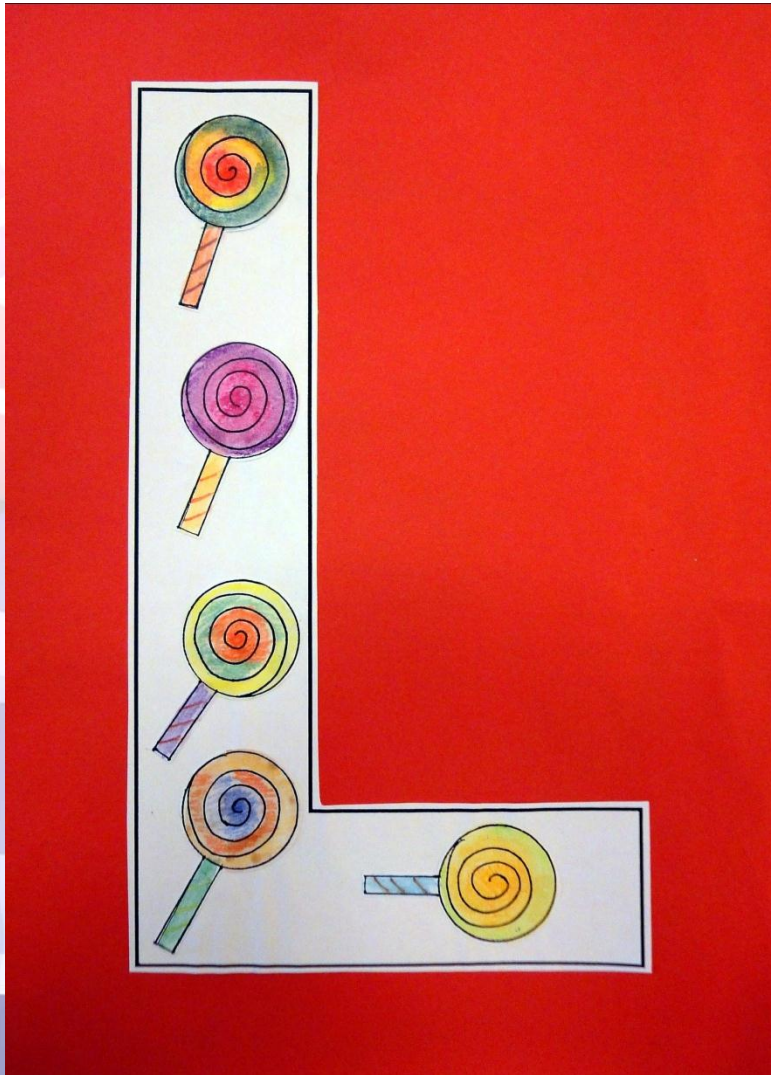
- It provided ample chances for children to **say the target letter sound while tracing the target letter.**
- It helped children **remember the word that begins with the target letter.**



Art and craft activities



Art and craft activities



Storytelling – Letter P

Video-clips (8 mins)



Storytelling– Letter M



Storytelling

- The teacher **emphasised and repeatedly said the target letter sound** when telling the story.
- **Children** were motivated to **pronounce the target letter sound with the story characters naturally.** Children became familiarised with the target letter sound when they were repeatedly exposed to it.
- After listening to the story, the teacher **related the letter sound to the print of the letter** explicitly using the word examples in the story.

Real-life experience activity – Letter P

Video-clip – Making popcorn (1 min)



- ♦ The activity ‘Making popcorn’ provided chances for **children to listen to and imitate the target sound /p/** (popping sound).

Real-life experience activity – Letter M

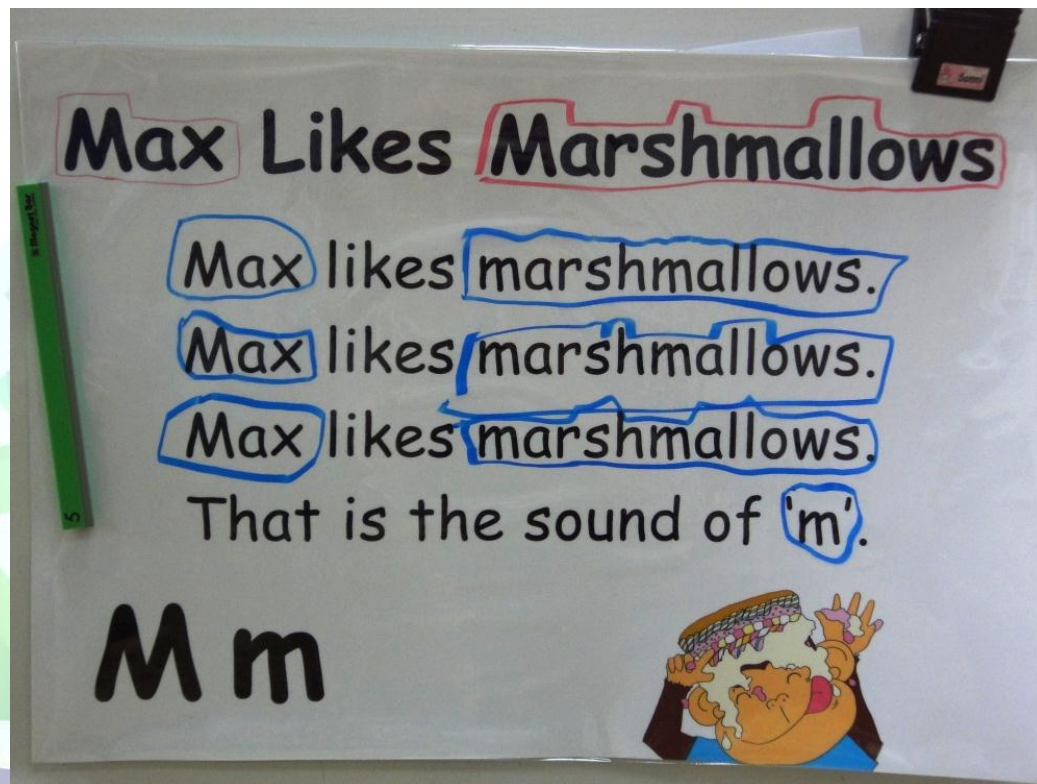
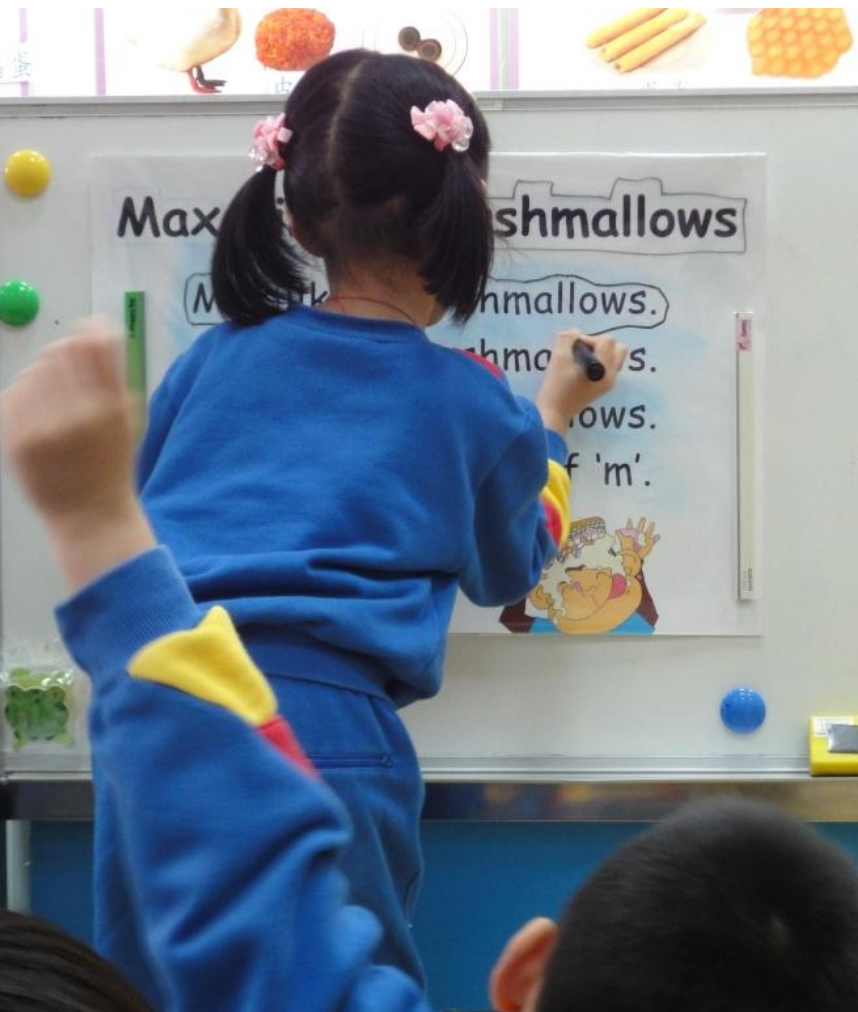
- ◆ The activity ‘Tasting hot chocolate with marshmallow’ motivated children to say ‘/m/... yummy’ after they tasted the drink.



Songs

- ◆ **Reading the lyrics and singing the songs** helped children consolidate the letter-sound relationship.
- ◆ Children were asked to **frame the words that began with the target letter** in the song. It offered children chances to use their phonics knowledge.

Song – Letter M



Tongue Twister

- Children were invited to read the words on the bricks very quickly. They found the tongue twister very challenging for them.
- It provided a purpose for children to **practise saying the words with beginning sound /g/ in a fun way.**



Teachers' reflection and learning

- The children loved stories more and were more interested in letter sounds.
- Introducing letter sounds through stories helped the children retain what they had learned, as the children could easily associate the letter sound to the story or the word examples in the story.

Teachers' reflection and learning

- Inviting the children to suggest **other word examples** helped them **reactivate their prior knowledge** and transfer the phonics knowledge to new situations.
- **Fun-filled extended activities** were very useful to help children reinforce the letter-sound relationship.



Teachers' reflection and learning

- ◆ The Max's Adventure - English Letter Story Series (ELSS) was very effective :
 - ◆ The main characters were appealing and funny.
 - ◆ The storylines were related to the children's daily-life experience.
 - ◆ The children could be easily **engaged in imitating the target letter sounds** as the stories provided **meaningful contexts**.



Way Forward

- From the 2011/12 school year onward, the teachers would continue to use **story books** and the **ELSS** for introducing letter sounds through **shared reading** and **storytelling activities** at the K2 and K3 level.

2011/12 K2 English Plan

1 st Term			2 nd Term		
Story Title	Letter	Letter sound and word examples	Story Title	Letter	Letter sound and word examples
<i>The Zoo</i>	/	/	<i>The Picnic</i>	Jj Ss	/dʒ/ (juice, jam, jelly) /s/(sausages, salad)
<i>Off To School</i>	Cc Bb	/k/ (cup, coat) /b/ (bag, book, box)	<i>Max is quacking</i>	Qq	/kw/ (quack)
<i>Baby Ben</i>	Bb	/b/ (baby, ben)	<i>The Great Hamburger</i>	/	/
<i>Max is itchy!</i>	Ii	/ɪ/ (itchy)	<i>Happy Easter</i>	Hh Ll	/h/ (how, happy) /l/ (let's. long)
<i>Ho!Ho!Ho!</i>	Yy	/j/ (you, yo-yo)	<i>Dressing Up</i>	Ff	/f/ (fun, fireman)
<i>Kenny makes the funny sound!</i>	Kk	/k/ (Kenny)	<i>Mr. Noisy's Helpers</i>	/	/
<i>The Double-decker bus</i>	Tt Dd	/t/ (to, top) /d/ (double, decker)	<i>The hairdryer is very loud!</i>	Vv	/v/ (very)
<i>What's that sound?</i>	Nn Bb	/n/ (not, no) /b/ (baby, boom-ba)	<i>Water Everywhere</i>	Ww	/w/ (water, window)

Letter sounds in black: Introduced through shared reading activities of the core series of story books (17 letter sounds in total)

Letter sounds in grey: Reinforced through shared reading activities of the core series of story books

Letter sounds in blue: Introduced through storytelling activities (English Letter Story Series) (9 letter sounds in total)

2011/12 K3 English Plan

1 st Term			2 nd Term		
Story Title	Letter	Letter sound and word examples	Story Title	Letter	Letter sound and word examples
<i>I Can</i>	Tt Hh	/t/ (turn, to, today) /h/ (hop, head)	<i>Into Town</i>	Mm Bb	/m/ (motor, mothers) /b/ (bicycle, bell)
<i>Eric does the exercise</i>	Ee	/e/ (Eric, exercise)	<i>Sorry, I'm busy!</i>	I	I
<i>The Parade</i>	Bb Pp Gg	/b/ (boy, bell) /p/ (piggy, people) /g/ (go, girl)	<i>Spring Is Here</i>	Cc	/k/ (come, coat)
<i>The Mouse And The Giraffe</i>	Xx Oo Gg	/ks/ (box, ox) /ɒ/ (ox, on) g (goat, got)	<i>Down In The Sea</i>	Ss Dd Ll	/s/ (sea, see) /d/ (dolphin, dancing, down) /l/ (long, looking)
<i>Max is roaring!</i>	Rr	/r/ (roaring)	<i>What A Very Hot Day!</i>	Jj	/dʒ/ (jelly, juice)
<i>Bees are in the zoo</i>	Zz	/z/ (zoo)	<i>The North Wind and The Sun</i>	I	I
<i>The Salad</i>	Ss	/s/ (salad, sauce, some)	<i>Up goes the umbrella!</i>	Uu	/ʌ/ (up, umbrella)
<i>Maggie wants an apple!</i>	Aa	/ə/ (an, apple)			

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Reference

Curriculum Development Council. (2004). *English language curriculum guide (Primary 1 -6)*. Hong Kong: The Education and Manpower Bureau, HKSAR.

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Gillon, G.T. (2004). *Phonological awareness: From research to practice*. New York, USA: The Guilford Press