

(a) Background

We are a small- scale aided primary school with limited financial and human resources. Our school has 6 classes with about 160 pupils from P.1 to P.6. We have a total number of 15 teaching staff. 5 of them are teaching English. Our budget for resources and teachers training is insufficient. Recently, we have found an innovative phonics teaching program called **Synthetic Phonics** that we believe will greatly help out students to sharpen their early literacy skills. Our teachers believe phonics and reading skills are crucial to enhance English learning for our children. Unfortunately, we lack the financial resources to obtain the materials and training necessary to implement positive changes. We are therefore in need of assistance from the QEF.

Background of Teaching Early Literacy (English) in Hong Kong.

Comparing to the natural way of learning early literacy skills by Native English Speaking Children, whose English sounding out skills have been taught and emphasized since the pre- school years, an important piece in English learning is missing for the children in Hong Kong. It is the ability to sound out the sounds of the alphabets as well as to make words through knowledge of letter sounds relation. These phonics skills have not been systematically taught to our pupils throughout their primary school education. Consequently our pupils' are having difficulties in listening and sounding out the sounds of the alphabets and words.

- **Alphabet names instead of alphabet sounds** are being taught throughout their school years. Unfortunately, the alphabet names give little clue whatsoever on how a word should be sounded out.
- **The sounding out problem:** English vocabulary has traditionally been taught as 'sight word' in Hong Kong. Children are required to memorize the meaning and the sound of a board range of vocabulary.
- **English Spelling** is a difficult chore for children with no knowledge of the pattern that English words are being sounded out from individual alphabets. Students lack the skills to construct words using common spelling pattern.

Background of English Teaching at School

From our school's experience, students start to feel the frustration in English learning in P.3 as the numbers of English vocabulary increases making rote learning no longer effective. Consequently, they also have great difficulty in spelling (dictation). We think that by explicitly teaching phonics skills will address pupils' spelling and reading needs.

At present, our students do not have specific phonic lesson within our curriculum. Our school does not have any teaching materials design for teaching phonics. A few months back, our English Panel and a few English teachers have attended a workshop on teaching synthetic phonics and were very impressed with

the approach. They found the synthetic phonics approach is very motivating and easy to follow. They would also want our students to have these pleasurable learning experiences. Thus, we have decided to introduce this phonics system to our pupils.

Background of Students

80% of our students are cross-border students from Shenzhen. English is being taught as a foreign language. Children lack the crucial daily exposure to spoken and written English. In general, they do not have the habits of watching English TV shows, reading English books or communicate using English both at home and at school.

- Of low – average learning abilities.
- 20% of our students have special educational needs.
- Comes from low- income families with minimal or no support in learning English.
- 70% of our students are from mainland China. They have learnt little English before coming to Hong Kong who are experiencing difficulties in learning English.
- We feel that the sooner they learn phonics, the quicker they will improve in their reading and spelling.

Background of Teachers

- Committed and enthusiastic in teaching English.
- Have limited experience in teaching phonics and reading skills therefore professional training is essential to equip our teachers with new knowledge and skills.

(b) Objectives

1. To provide professional phonics training both in theory and in practice to our English teachers.
2. To produce confident and innovative teachers who can create an enjoyable English learning environment for our pupils.
3. To integrate phonics into our regular English lessons, bringing reciprocal benefits.
4. To produce children who will enjoy learning English because they are more confident to read and write. They are able to cope with words they have never seen before, because they have learnt to decode using synthetic phonics.
5. To produce school- based phonics program and teaching resources, enabling the future running of the program without further external support.

1. **Duration of the Project:** 12 months

2. **Beneficiaries**

The direct targets of this project will be 50 students from P.1 & P.2, newly admitted students from other levels and English teachers. We also anticipate that about 30 parents will benefit from the phonics training workshop.

3. **Activities to be organized and the details**

Duties of the English Teacher

- 26 lessons per week, co – teaching with our English teacher.
- 10 hours per 2 weeks to hold extra curriculum activities.
- Prepare additional resources and lesson plans for phonics teaching.

Phonics teaching for students the synthetic phonics way

- Lessons led by a full time NET teacher.
- Two lessons (each 35 minutes), twice per week during school hours, a total of 36 weeks.
- Extra curriculum activities: special interest group on alliterative, rhyme, vowel, digraphs, blends, etc especially for the more – able students.

Special features

Letter sound

- Students will be able to sound out individual alphabets confidently and accurately.
- Students can apply the alliterative sounds in carefully chosen alliterative stories.

Change of sounds and irregular sound patterns

- Consonant blends, digraphs, rhymes;
- Students will be able to consciously watch out and address the different vowel sounds in a control manner.

Word building

- Practice the spelling strategy: students to participate in acting out the sounds interactively, in front of the class. They will quickly be able to recognize the sound blending of alphabets confidently, in an enjoyable manner.

The NET teacher and the English teaching team will jointly refine the following program, which covers the core and the optional phonics teaching areas. Teaching order will be flexible to meet the regular English lesson needs.

Phonics teacher training for the teachers

It will cover theory and practical sessions:

- 20 hours phonics teacher training workshop will enhance teachers' readiness in phonics teaching.
- Through co – teaching by the LET and the NET during phonics lessons, LET can acquire the practical phonics teaching skills. These teachers will handle the phonics lessons on their own with subsequent years.

School- wide phonics awareness activities

In parallel with the phonics lessons, the school will also run activities emphasizing the sound for the week or month:

- **More readers including phonics readers will be put at the school library.**
- **Spelling bee**
- **English Week-** school- wide focus on the use of phonics.

IT in Phonics

In order for the students to refresh their knowledge on sounds, we shall utilize online phonics resources in the computer room.

Phonics for parents

Special phonics awareness workshop will be provided to interested parents on if time and venues are available.

4. Action Plan with Timeline

August 2012	Recruitment of English Teacher
Sep , 2012– June 2013	Phonics teaching and training for teachers (Phonics Workshop) Phonics curriculum planning through collaboration between the LET and NET. Students Phonics Lessons
July, 2013	Program Evaluation

5. Expected Outcome and Deliverables**1) Teachers: Professional Training**

Teachers' enriched phonics skills acquired through training, co- teaching, and phonics application at the regular lessons will enhance teachers' level professionalism. Their skills and experience will become important assets of the school and the teachers themselves.

- Acquired phonics teaching skills.
- Oral communication ability will be improved through ability with the NET.
- Teachers get lots of practical teaching ideas in a fun way while co – teaching with the NET.

2) Students: Enjoy Learning English

By the end of the program:

- Learning English becomes a meaningful cognitive process, rather than a boring and difficult task.
- English learning becomes pleasurable and successful learning experience
- Students will become more confident in reading and spelling. Besides, due to the unique multisensory and participative approach of the synthetic phonics approach, our children will also have an extended vocabulary derived from the activities and phonics readers.
- Enjoy sounding out and acting out opportunities through spelling unfamiliar words in front of the entire class.
- Phonetic resources/teaching materials will be uploaded to the school website.

3) Products

The following will form future phonics teaching resources for our English teachers:

- A customized phonics program including the tailored teaching areas of each level of student, by term, as well as a set of vocabularies suitable for phonics practice with reference to the primary curriculum.
- Classroom phonics application handbooks jointly compiled by the English teachers of each level and the NET teacher.
- Phonics activities project folder with all the sound based activities for future teaching needs and references.
- Worksheet folders will be collated as a sample of phonics teaching kit.
- DVDs recording on teaching processes and training sessions by the NET will be produced for the purposes of dissemination for future teachers' reference.

Report Submission Schedule

I / My school / My organization commit(s) to submit proper reports in strict accordance with the following schedule :

Project Management		Financial Management	
Type of Report and covering period	Report due day	Type of Report and covering period	Report due day
Final Report 1/9/2012 - 31/8/2013	30/11/2013	Final Financial Report 1/9/2012 - 31/8/2013	30/11/2013

EVALUATION

The attainment levels of the children will be measured at the beginning, middle and end of the year in order to assess their achievement levels in phonics, English listening and speaking skills. An evaluation

form for individual student will be designed to record the student's progress, on regular interim.

- a) In class spelling: on - going practice at the classroom will provide an objective yardstick for teachers to assess the children's application of sound knowledge.
- b) Decoding: The unique synthetic phonics way of written reinforcement of phonics knowledge will indicate objectively if the student has interpreted the phonics structure correctly.
- c) Quiz: sound theme based activities will be organized for students of various levels.
- d) Phonics games for change of sound phonics stories- demonstrate if a student can instantly respond to the change of letter sound relationship in alphabet combination.
- e) Read aloud assessment- based on both phonics stories as well as regular school readers, which will include unfamiliar words for the student. This will require the student to employ the phonics skills to decode the words.
- f) A survey to evaluate students' enjoyment level.

Teachers' Professional Attainment

A questionnaire will be given to all teachers to evaluate the effectiveness of the training, co-teaching experience and level of success in bring phonics to life at the English lessons.

6. BUDGET BREAKDOWN

	Items	Amount
1	Staff Cost \$22405 / month x 1.05 x 12	\$282,303
2	Teaching Materials - Reference Book - Printing Cost - Word Cards	\$11,921
3	Audit Fee	\$5,000
	Total	\$299,224 (\$299,300)

Assert Usage Plan

Category (in alphabetical order)	Item / Description	No. of Units	Total Cost	Proposed Plan for Deployment (Note)
Books	a. Level readers including phonics readers,	200 – 260	Around \$11,300 – \$11,400 –	Whole class shared reading/Small group shared reading/Guided reading/One-to-one

	b. Teaching strategies for teachers			reading *All books will be kept for future teaching purpose upon project completion
Word cards	Phonics flash cards	10 - 20 sets	Around \$600-\$700	Whole class phonics activities *All phonics materials will be kept for future teaching purpose upon project completion

Note: for use by school / organization / in other projects (please provide details of the department / centre to which the asset will be deployed and the planned usage of the asset in activities upon project completion).

(D) Other Favorable Factors:

1. Uniqueness of the program – based on the UK's synthetic phonics system

It was reported that over 70% of the British schools practice the Synthetic approach in teaching phonics from pre-school through primary school. It is also popular in many Asian countries.

In Hong Kong, synthetic phonics is being used in 80% of the HK International schools and it is noted leading that many top local schools who have implemented the synthetic phonics program are getting outstanding results in early reading and writing in Key Stage 1 and have received positive comments from teachers and parents.

- ✓ Each alphabet is given a character with unique sound behaviors.
- ✓ Songs and chants, storytelling will appeal to children of all ages.
- ✓ The colorful teaching and reading materials and the unique phonics songs can capture children's imagination when dealing with different phonemes.

We are confident that through practicing and learning phonics the synthetic phonics way in the classrooms, our students will not only improve their phonological awareness and reading skills. It will also develop a better learning attitude towards learning English.

2. Readiness of the school in undertaking the project

- i) Our school has an experienced NET for many years and he is very supportive about teaching phonics skills in the lower primary classroom.
- ii) Our English teachers have great enthusiasm in helping the students in English learning. And is excited to have the opportunities for further professional development in phonics teaching.
- iii) The English teaching team has full support from school administrative team. The teachers are committed and are prepared to work with the NET to integrate the phonics skills into the regular English lessons.
- iv) We plan to decorate 2 classrooms P.1 & P.2 with attractive Synthetic Phonics wall frieze, teaching poster to create an environment which is conducive for phonics teaching and learning.

3. How the activities can be continued after the QEF grant has been exhausted, especially those require funding.

The funding is basically for the cost of hiring a teacher who is familiar in teaching phonics. Upon completion of the project, it is the intention and commitment of the schools' English teachers will integrate phonics teaching into regular English lessons. If the school has additional needs after the project date, a further proposal will be submitted for further financial aid from the QEF.

In terms of phonics teaching materials- all items are re-useable such as teaching guide, DVDs and photocopy master. Students do not have to buy and students materials. However, if the school has additional need. Further financial aid from the QEF may be needed.

(E) Background of the School:

1. School Mission

We strive to help our students develop their knowledge, physical fitness and aesthetics. Thus they will become good citizens who are involved in improving society and contributing to nation.

2. The School

- Ta Ku Ling Ling Ying Public School
- A small rural school in the North District
- 6 classes, of approximately 162 students and 14 full time teaching staff.