

English teaching in Hou Kong Middle School

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Chinese medium schools in Macao have, for quite a period of time, been tagged with a “negative” stereotype with respect to their English proficiency. Having, for several years, gained so many Excellence Awards in Macao inter-school English Recitation Competitions and prizes in English Speech Contests both in regionally and nationwide, our Hou Kong Middle School has been given the opportunity to achieve the good reputation for Chinese medium schools. These awards and prizes are not only the recognition of the effect of our schools’ English teaching reform but also the promotion for our English teaching. Ever since the liberalization of the Macao gambling industry, Macao has become more and more globalized. Demand for English proficiency is increasing in social activities, personal capacity and career progression. In order to live up to the expectation of our students, parents and the whole society, we have done a lot to improve our students’ English level and the professional development of our teachers.

More resources have been put into the English subject

Owing to our school’s policy in favor of the English subject, one more period has been added to Junior One and Senior Two for Extensive English Reading. As we all know the model for

language learning involves the input of reading and listening. They are essential for English learning. The more time students spend on reading English in class, the more guidance they can get from teachers.

Another consideration for the English subject is small class sizes for the English oral class. The school has arranged two English teachers for each English oral class. Students are split into two small groups and have more chances to speak and interact with teachers and their peers and to express their ideas in English more easily.

Furthermore, the school has hired foreign teachers to enhance students’ language abilities and to help Senior Two and Senior Three students master the language skills for the university entrance examination. The school has also provided extra financial support for the benefit of our students and society.

Seeking the external help and building good cooperation

In order to develop our overall English teaching level, our school has signed a pact with the 21st Century English (Beijing) Educational Media Centre, making our school

the only experimental base for National English Newspaper Reading in Macao. This provides our teachers with an academic exchange platform for newspaper teaching and learning, courseware making, thesis writing and project application. It provides our students with an English study platform for newspaper reading, speech contests, English editing, English writing, English campus reporter, study tour abroad, etc. We also have signed a cooperation pact with Macao Polytechnic Institute. Hou Kong Middle School has become the English Teaching Experimental Base of MPI. Experts from the Bell Centre of MPI come to our school to give training to our teachers. This has created the school-based English training for teachers (training specially designed for our teachers’ professional development). We also have hired ETAs from the Bell Centre of MPI who together with our teachers have English saloons for students of different forms. Moreover we are cooperating with Central Washington University, US. CWU accepts English teachers from our school to receive training in the US and sends their graduates to have their internships at our school, and so assisting our English teaching.

Focus on school- based curriculum We have strengthened our English teaching and learning by compiling our own school-based teaching books and materials. Over recent years, the English Panel has already compiled ‘Write Perfect’, ‘English Salon’, ‘Hou Kong English Teaching Syllabus’, ‘English Vocabulary for Junior’, ‘English Vocabulary for Senior’ and ‘Hou Kong English Standard Grammar Guidance’. ‘Hou Kong Junior One English Speaking’ and ‘Hou Kong Junior Two English Speaking’ textbooks are almost completed. What we want is to tailor our course materials to the needs of our students by making our own books.

Striving hard for the teacher’s greater professional development

Excellent teachers nurture excellent students and foster excellent schools. The qualities of teachers are vital. We take building up a team of excellent teachers especially English teachers into serious consideration. School-based training

courses, provided by the ESP trainers from MPI-Bell, benefit our teachers developing rich methodology skills as well as other expertise. We also invite English experts from Hong Kong, America and the 21st Century English (Beijing) Educational Media Centre to provide training, seminars and workshops for our English teachers.

We also have arranged at least 2 hours per week for our teachers to share their teaching ideas as well as their methodology and problem solving experiences.

What is more, we are sending teachers to Shun Tak for a series of training programs. Having the two weeks off to do the training is really helpful. Besides taking DSEJ’s overseas summer training activities, we also collaborate with Central Washington University, USA. Some of our teachers are taking a one-month training course during the summer vacation.

Successful application for the national project

In the academic year 2011 our Hou Kong English panel successfully applied for the national project ‘English Newspapers Teaching and School Curriculum Development’. This is one of the sub-projects of the Chinese Society of Education’s 12th Five-Year Plan Series Project. This project has involved all grades from Junior One to Senior Three. We are the first to have obtained the permit for this project in Macao. It is a big support to creating our own way of Hou Kong English teaching. Newspapers bridge the gap between the classroom and the real world; help build good reading habits that will last a lifetime; give every student something interesting to read whether news, sports, entertainment, weather, editorials, comics, etc.; contains practical vocabulary and the best models of clear & concise writing. This project actually will last for at least two years.

Different schools have different features and we wish to research and develop our own effective model of English teaching.