

Realizing “Unity” through Pre-Texts

Key Stakeholders:

- Principal Ms. Vince Wong
- Teachers Ms. Cathy To, Mr. Travis Tan, and Ms. Carol Li
- Facilitator Mr. David Chen

In December 2024, we held a nine-session Language Out Loud/Pre-Texts workshop for Primary 4 learners at Yaumati Kaifong Association School (YMTKAS). The teachers, principals, and facilitators agreed on a set theme of “Unity” which aligned with the school’s Core Value of the Month for December.

One of the defining features of YMTKAS is its incredibly diverse student body, which includes learners from more than 20 countries. The school’s mission to celebrate diversity aligned well with the Pre-Texts approach of integrating diverse perspectives in literacy development.

The dual message of celebrating diversity while achieving unity is inherently “baked” into the Pre-Texts approach, where we seek to achieve a shared sense of learning by engaging with a diversity of creative and inquisitive expressions.

Based on the theme, we chose the text “Stone Soup” by Jon J Muth and designed a workshop that brought ideas of cooking, diverse ingredients, and communal meals for learners to discover and connect to their Core Value focus.

Using the essential Pre-Texts approach of playing with the text, learners demonstrated a strong enthusiasm for reading out loud with each other, asking questions and responding to each other, and creating art from the text material. Learners reflected that they learned “to respect one another”, “have fun while learning”, and “learn about unity” through our journey reading and playing with Stone Soup.



Getting into a circle to introduce our names

Activities:



Learners practising “asking questions” to each other by guessing what food label is on their forehead



The learners expressed their interest in reading out loud so we decided to “choral read” sections of the text while the others drew or read along at their desks.



Learners drew while listening to the story and wrote down questions they had about the text. Then they walked around and answered each others questions.



Learners organised and performed the story of Stone Soup at the school hall



Learners adopted sections of the text to draw an illustration to match it. Later, we combined all the drawings together to make our own illustrated version of the story

Reflections

One of the most promising results of the workshop was that learners were able to connect the story's meaning with our chosen theme of Unity without the word ever mentioned during class. This was an encouraging result that demonstrates that when values are baked into the procedure, routine, and energy of a group, these values will make themselves known to the participants. Some learners reflected in our "What Did We Do" portion that "we learned to respect each other." These emergent realisations of values come from experiencing the positive outcome they produce when practised, and the Pre-Texts protocol ensures these experiences through its commitment to learner-centric, artistically-driven literacy development.

All in all, learners responded with a common reflection: "We enjoyed playing and learning at the same time." The school principal, Ms. Vince Wong, reflected:

LOL offers a good blend of moral, civic education and literacy development. It certainly allows for deeper learning experiences. [The workshop] helped me to reflect a great deal on our teaching methods and how teaching can be approached. It's truly inspiring to witness students sharing their views and thoughts freely.

Citizenship in a classroom inherently develops as we practise routines such as responding to each other, appreciating each other's work, and experiencing joyful learning successes with each other. Learners did not just "learn" what Unity and Diversity means, they experienced the fruits of Unity and Diversity in their learning.