

Innovations in Thinking and Learning

Beth Grosso – Ladder of Inference: Consolidation for Deeper Understanding

BETH: Let me ask you this. What were some really good things about doing that activity? Emma?

STUDENT: When we were making our fish facts, we weren't using too much interpretations. We saved that for our suitcase part.

BETH: Oh, fantastic. Because we talked a little bit, so I'm going to -- we talked a little bit about sometimes that's one of the hard things, right, when you create these ladders, is the difference between fact and interpretation. What were some of the conclusions Melanie came to about Chester? Raise your hand if you have a conclusion, and just read off that conclusion.

STUDENT: He's bossy, and I have to be more strict with him.

BETH: I have to be stricter with him. He's bossy.

STUDENT: He's a very bad puddy cat.

BETH: He's a very bad pussy cat. Phoenix?

STUDENT: Bossy, and all, like, and mean.

BETH: Okay. Isn't it funny how Chester didn't see himself like that. So now, though, let's do Melanie. Because according to Melanie, she is Miss Perfect, isn't she? Can anyone share the conclusion that Chester had about Melanie?

STUDENT: She hates me.

BETH: She hates me? Okay. We have hateful.

STUDENT: I need to get back at her.

BETH: Ooh, I need to get back at her. The ladders we built today look very different than the ladder that Chester built about -- think of all the ladders that Melanie built about Chester. Why did Chester not see it that way? Why did Chester not see it that way?

STUDENT: Because they're both kind of selfish, in a way. So they don't notice it.

BETH: Ah, okay.

STUDENT: They're not looking at other people's fish. They're just looking at what they want to see. I'm the best, she's rude, I don't care about --

STUDENT: And that's being selfish.

BETH: Okay. So actually, you've sort of gotten into my next part. Why is it important to look at someone else's data pool? Do you think Chester should look at the data pool of Melanie, and do you think Melanie could benefit from looking at the data pool of Chester? What do you think?

STUDENT: They both have made like we did a couple of days ago, where we said what they would have described themselves. And they think they're kind of both perfect, and they're the best. But really, they both have their ups and downs to them.

BETH: So when we don't look in another person's ladder, are we hurting or helping? Matee?

STUDENT: It hurts people.

BETH: So why don't I always look at someone else's ladder? I've decided I want to do it this way. My mother says, no, you should do it this way. Why do we choose -- why do I choose not to look at my mother's ladder? If I know it's going to help by looking, so why do I choose? Casey?

STUDENT: Because you don't want to look at the other person's ladder. You want to do it your own way.

BETH: Well, why don't I? Why don't I want to do [INAUDIBLE]? Luke?

STUDENT: You're so confident about it that you don't take the time to try to look at someone else's ladder. And you don't think that they could be right.

STUDENT: You don't want to admit that you're wrong.

BETH: You don't want to, sorry?

STUDENT: Admit that you're wrong.

BETH: Ah. We don't like to admit that we're wrong.

STUDENT: You don't want to just say, "I'm wrong."

BETH: That's right. We don't want to admit that we're wrong. It's kind of hard to admit that you're wrong, isn't it?

STUDENT: Yeah.

STUDENT: You're kind of embarrassed when you're wrong. But sometimes it's good, because that makes you strong as a person.

BETH: Okay. Anyone else? Yeah, Matee?

STUDENT: The only one is Bill fighting Chester. Now everyone thinks Chester is a meanie. He's mean. He's not letting Melanie Watt do her book.

BETH: So you're saying -- so Melanie Watt is vilifying --?

STUDENT: Chester.

BETH: Chester.

STUDENT: Well, when you really look at it --

BETH: That's pretty good.

STUDENT: Melanie Watts is a bad person.

BETH: When you really look at it, what?

STUDENT: Melanie Watts is quite a bad person, if you think about it. Like the way she acts with Chester, it's as if he's her slave.

BETH: What else? Yes, Emma?

STUDENT: Melanie is making everyone have a preconceived notion about Chester, and Chester is making everyone have a preconceived notion about Melanie.

BETH: What I love about what you did, because we're going to move on to the second part now, what I liked about what you did is, you went beyond the book, Chester. I don't know if you even noticed you were doing that. Did you notice you were doing that?

STUDENT: A little.

STUDENT: No.

STUDENT: No.

BETH: You were doing that. So now we're going to talk about, how do we use the ladder? Because obviously we used the ladder to do some inferring here, right, about Chester and Melanie. But how do we use the ladder to help us solve problems in the classroom? So let's now go beyond the text. But the thing is, you've already gone beyond the text. How do we use the problem? How do we use the ladder to help us solve a problem. Yeah?

STUDENT: We can use it to see what's going on in someone else's data pool, or what's going on in their life. So say someone has, like, somebody who just died in their family. That's kind of hiding behind a plant, and you don't really know that. Say you get in, like, a fight with them, you don't know why they're acting like that.

STUDENT: Usually if something like a small fight happened, you'd usually get over it. But since he had something so big in his data pool, he felt like he couldn't get over it, and it was much bigger.

BETH: And what happened to the class? And we saw what was in this person's data pool?

STUDENT: We totally changed how we looked at it, because we thought it's just a dumb, little problem. What's so big about it? Why is he so frustrated? But then you find out that he has something so big, like, he was moving it.

BETH: So that was -- someone was talking about -- who mentioned "aha moment" earlier? Faith, you mentioned it. And sometimes that is our aha moment, right? Something that we think, oh my goodness, are you kidding me? You're going to make a big deal about this, really? Right? And then that's the aha moment.

STUDENT: The aha moment actually helped the class get stronger, because every time there's an aha moment, we can -- the class bonds. Because let's say we thought there

was a little problem, but we found that someone was moving. And we, as a class, we helped that person feel better inside, and make it not a big deal. So the class community gets stronger.

BETH: Okay.

STUDENT: And you know, when there's a problem it gets stronger, because we're working together to solve it and make the classroom community happy again.

BETH: Okay, Christian, you had your hand up.

STUDENT: It's not about an aha moment, but I just want to bring this up. We had a problem once with two people, that one person was calling someone else a name, and then he knew that it was bothering the other person. But what made me wonder, and probably some of the other students here, was wondering if, like, why does this person do this mean thing to him if he knows that it bothers him?

BETH: So when the ladder leaders work with this person, what might the ladder leaders do to make sure this person knows what's happening?

STUDENT: Look further into both of their data pools.

BETH: Okay. Okay.

BETH: And look at their conclusions and see if there's any relationship.

BETH: Okay, you guys are doing well. Emma?

STUDENT: When the ladder we did helped -- the ladder we use, we'll have to keep in mind. I've thought that where I've been helping someone, because I'm already doing it. It's like sometimes it's hard to not think, "Oh, this person's wrong, this person's right," you have to kind of see both sides.

BETH: Mm-hmm.

STUDENT: And you still don't make a connection, because neither of them was right or wrong. They could have both been wrong, but they could have both been right at the same time.

BETH: Okay. Okay. I do want to move on. I want to ask -- we talked about our schema suitcase, and our schema suitcase was right over here. What does our schema suitcase have to do with the ladder of inference? What does it -- or helping us reach our conclusion? What does the schema suitcase even have to do with that? Sanoya?

STUDENT: That it's what has happened to your own life experiences. And actually, it helps you to get to your conclusion.

BETH: We talked a little bit about perception versus perspectives. Who can tell me the difference? Perception versus perspectives. What's the perception? It's how we what? Perception? Leona?

STUDENT: How we see things?

BETH: How we see things. So we see the Snow Hill rule I think you were saying about as being unfair, or fair. That's the perception. What's the perspective, then? What's the perspective? If the perception is how we see it, what's the perspective? What's going to affect that?

STUDENT: The schema suitcase.

BETH: Yeah. It's your schema suitcase, right? It's all that stuff that you carry around. It's like when I have parent-teacher interviews at that back table. And your parents -- I tell your parents how wonderful you are, and your parents look at me and say, "No, are you kidding me? I think you've got the wrong kid!" Because why? Why? Why?

STUDENT: We're only with you for, like, six hours of the day.

BETH: Right.

STUDENT: Our parents have been with us for, like --

STUDENT: Our whole lives.

STUDENT: Our whole life.

BETH: So they have a different perspective. Remember I talked to you guys about a person who's in the news a lot now, right, in the media? And I said to you, "This person is a bully." Fact or interpretation? And you all said to me, what?

STUDENT: Fact.

STUDENT: But it's an interpretation!

BETH: And I hate to tell you -- no, it's not a fact. That's actually an interpretation. Yes.

STUDENT: You feel like the interpretation is such a fact because you believe in it so badly. Like the person you were talking about in the news --

BETH: Yes?

STUDENT: -- you feel like he's such a rude person. He's such a bully. He's always trying to get everybody on his side when he's such a jerk. But in the end, it's really an interpretation. Half the people in the world might like him.

BETH: Does anyone want to add on? Leona?

STUDENT: When people don't want to be about the fish, and they don't want to talk about what they were doing, it's kind of hard to put the fish so you know what your interpretation is about that.

BETH: Okay.

STUDENT: One time we had a problem where someone didn't want to talk to the ladder leaders and you about the problem, and what they did or not.

BETH: If a problem happens, do we try to build the ladder, like, right away? What do we do? If we can, that's great. But sometimes, what do we have to do?

STUDENT: We waited just a little bit, and then asked again if we wanted to talk about it now.

BETH: That's right.

STUDENT: And what if you wait too long? Some people can actually make up fish.

BETH: Okay, yes, we've had that.

STUDENT: That's a problem.

STUDENT: Just to make themselves look good, kind of --

BETH: Right.

STUDENT: -- I've got to explain it just like --

STUDENT: To cover up what the conclusion of them is.

BETH: Ah, okay.

STUDENT: Don't let the conclusion of that to be bad. So they make up those fish to kind of -- it might actually be going on. But just to make it so this is why. So he's kind of, like, people who feel a little bit bad for them. So it's not as much like kind of people could be rude to them.

BETH: Okay.

STUDENT: But we don't want to.

BETH: Could it help solve world problems? How does it -- how do we use it? Have you used it outside of the classroom?

STUDENT: I have. I make a ladder in my head. And my [INAUDIBLE] always is, she's all mean and rude. But then after the problem is done, I kind of think my sister comes to the conclusion probably that I am rude, too.

BETH: Interesting. And when you say you "make the ladder in your head," what do you mean? So you mean you're not actually taking a piece of paper out in the middle of the family -- like the dinner table or whatever, and starting to draw fish?

STUDENT: That takes up too long.

BETH: So what have you done? Yes?

STUDENT: I kind of forget the word that you told us.

STUDENT: Yeah!

STUDENT: But it started with an "I."

BETH: What are you doing?

STUDENT: It's something that you get internally. Internalize.

BETH: Yeah, but -- yeah. We sort of internalize the ladder, right? And that's what my hope was. When I showed you the ladder, my hope was that you wouldn't always have to draw it. My hope was that you would internalize.

STUDENT: It's like brushing your teeth. It's something you just start doing.

BETH: That's exactly it. Yes.

STUDENT: You can also use it when you're in fights with your mom, or something, because I do that a lot. I'll have a fight with my mom, and then we'll be, like -- I'll go lay down, and I'll be, like, oh yeah. I'll bet she's really mad at me. But I'm really mad at her.

BETH: Yeah. Exactly. Who else had their hand up here? Faith?

STUDENT: One other way, another place we can use the ladder is, like, sort of in war.

BETH: In war? Oh, my goodness! Tell me about that. That's a bit of a jump. Okay, go.

STUDENT: Okay, so one Army group could say, "We're fighting for this land because of this and that and this," and then the other Army could say, "We're fighting for this land because this and that and this." And then they sort of realize, we're both sort of fighting the same land for the same reasons.

BETH: Oh my goodness, yeah. We can compromise. We can share. So there are ways. And so don't get all worried, you said, "Oh, you know, what was the word?" Yeah, I did use the word "internalize" way back when I talked about this to you, because I said my hope is that you can internalize. Now I'm kind of seeing that you have sort of done that in a sense, right? We don't always take out the pencils and papers and take out the fish.

STUDENT: You don't really have to notice that you internalize it. It just happens. You -- after a while you get used to it, and it happens.

BETH: Exactly.