

Innovations in Thinking and Learning

Beth Grosso – Ladder of Inference: Classroom Lesson

BETH: We have talked about the Ladder of Inference, and I just want to do a really quick review with you. So pretend for a second -- and this is going to be hard -- pretend for a second I'm a teacher. I know it's hard. So you're just going to have to really imagine, okay, that I am a teacher. And a student walks into my room, and I see this. I see this student slam a door. I see a student stomp his or her feet. I see a student put their head down on the desk. Now, this is something that happened outside in the playground, just before school started. There was a conflict in the school yard, and this student was part of that conflict. So when we build the Ladder of Inference, what have I just created here? What do those fish represent? What do they represent? Phoenix?

STUDENT: Facts.

BETH: Facts. That's right.

STUDENT: Something that actually happened. It's not just something you think.

BETH: That's right. It's not your interpretation, that's right. It's not your interpretation. Something that actually happened. So now I, this is my little suitcase -- not very -- remember, I'm not a good drawer -- this is my little suitcase. This is my schema suitcase. What do I carry around in my schema suitcase? What do I carry around? Leona?

STUDENT: Your experiences?

BETH: All of my experiences. And so all my experiences, I'm going to look, and I'm going to say someone slammed a door. Someone stomped his feet, someone put his head down on his desk. I'm going into my schema suitcase right now, and I know something. I know that this behaviour, from my experiences, all right, because that's what your schema is, your experiences. From my experiences, I know that this person must be what? Must be what? Dallas?

STUDENT: Angry, upset and stressed.

BETH: Oh, okay, good. So I can write that down. So I can say I know this person must be upset. So my experience is telling me, this is not happy behaviour. I haven't looked out my window. Is there a fish fact there, although it's a fact, it's a fact that I did not

know happened -- look at those fish carefully. Is there a fish fact that happened, but I didn't know what happened? Matee?

STUDENT: Conflict in the schoolyard.

BETH: Yeah. So this little fish, and you guys will remember this from when we did it, he's sort of hiding behind a plant, isn't he? So when I am looking at the facts, how many fish am I actually looking at? How many fish am I actually looking at? Kelly?

STUDENT: Three.

BETH: Three. That little guy's behind a plant, right? But I still can go up my ladder -- so I'm going to draw my ladder here. So I go up my ladder, and I come to a conclusion about what my next step is for this student. What am I gonna decide I have to do with this student? Sanoya?

STUDENT: [INAUDIBLE].

BETH: Uh-huh. I need to go and help the student, don't I? So my conclusion is, I need to help the student. So the Ladder of Inference sort of works. I remember in primary grades, remember way, way back when you guys were in grade three?

STUDENT: Yeah.

BETH: What grade are you in now?

STUDENT: Four.

BETH: Four, yeah. Remember way back when --

STUDENT: Oh, yeah.

BETH: Yeah. When they used to talk about "I see," "I know?" And so...?

STUDENT: Yeah.

BETH: So this is the "I see," right? This is the "I know," and so, I've got to help this student. So let's take a look, which fact there am I not seeing? Or is there a fact there that is a very important fact that I'm not seeing? Leona?

STUDENT: The one that's behind the plant.

BETH: The one that's behind the...?

STUDENT: The plant.

BETH: Why is that such an important fish?

STUDENT: Because that's the fish that's making the student do all those things.

BETH: That's the cause, right? So what does this sort of teach us about looking at fish? What does this teach us about looking at fish? I'll give you a bit. Yousef?

STUDENT: Sometimes you have to try to ask people what they have, because you might have something that you don't know that's happening with them.

BETH: And if I don't do that, what am I going to miss out? What's going to happen?

STUDENT: Sometimes if you don't look at the fish that's behind a plant, you come to a conclusion. But if you do look, if you take that fish out of that plant, then you can maybe come to a different conclusion.

BETH: Fantastic. Exactly. So now, this is sort of our success criteria. We talked about that's sort of like a recipe for success, and how to use the ladder. So let's make sure that we've done an okay job before we move onto the activity.

So we have here -- so my fish are actual facts, and not based on opinion. Do you agree?

STUDENT: Yes.

BETH: Is there any fish there that you think is based on opinion? We're okay?

STUDENT: Yep.

BETH: Okay. My fishes are solid pieces of evidence that back up my conclusion. My conclusion is, I need to help the student. He slammed the door, he's stomping his feet, he has his head down on his desk, and I have found out that there was a conflict with another student. Does it back up my conclusion?

STUDENT: Yep.

STUDENT: Yes.

BETH: We're good? Okay. Two for two. My interpretation, that's this part right here, matches nicely the stuff that's in my schema suitcase. My interpretation matches my fish nicely, and is based on stuff in my schema suitcase. Do those two things connect?

STUDENT: What it means for that to happen is, it doesn't make absolute no sense. If you have fish that are saying they're all happy and stuff, you're not gonna say this person's angry.

BETH: Right. Exactly.

STUDENT: And since you have not facts, and your [INAUDIBLE] interpretation.

BETH: So we want to make sure we do this. And finally, is my conclusion sound? Or did I get up my ladder just a little too quickly? What do you think? What do you think? Is it a sound conclusion? Is it a good conclusion? If I go up the ladder too quickly, what can I do? Am I stuck up there with all these fish? What can I do? What can I do? Sanoya?

STUDENT: You can go back down the ladder to get [INAUDIBLE].

BETH: Oh, okay. So, you know, I come up this ladder, I've totally missed this fish, because let's just say that another teacher was on duty, totally missed this fish. I can go back down the ladder and I can speak to some teachers on duty, and they can say, "Oh, you know what? Yeah, I need to tell you something about so-and-so. Conflict outside." Oh. That totally changes things. Go back up the ladder, and now, wish all those fish, I can actually help the student even more. Emma?

STUDENT: Because sometimes it's nice to have someone else clarify something, so you don't run up that ladder too quickly.

BETH: That's right. So now that I've done a Ladder of Inference, I want to see if you can do a Ladder of Inference. So as you know, we've read the book, "Chester." And who are the main two characters in this book? Luke?

STUDENT: Melanie Watt and Chester.

BETH: Melanie and Chester. So remember I asked you, so if you go to our little board here that shows all of our Chester thinking. Remember I asked you to describe Chester to me? How did you describe Chester? Yousef?

STUDENT: Rude, disrespectful, only thinks about himself.

BETH: Mm-hmm. And why?

STUDENT: Because he was tormenting Melanie, and he was messing up Melanie's book.

BETH: Exactly. What about Melanie? How did you all describe Melanie? Faith?

STUDENT: Calm, her words don't show any anger.

BETH: Mm-hmm. Then I asked you, so how does Chester see Chester? How did Chester see Chester?

STUDENT: Cool.

BETH: Cool? He thinks he's cool. How many of you know a Chester. Don't give names. How many of you think you know a Chester? Someone who's like a Chester, who thinks all of these wonderful things about themselves, right? Yeah, exactly. So then I asked you, describe how do you think Melanie would describe Melanie? How would Melanie describe Melanie?

STUDENT: Calm.

BETH: Calm?

STUDENT: Hard working.

BETH: Hard working.

STUDENT: Respectful.

BETH: Respectful. Remember that word? Yeah?

STUDENT: Very smart.

BETH: Very smart. Yeah?

STUDENT: Kind, calm.

BETH: Collected, nice. Neat. All these wonderful, wonderful Melanie words, right? Melanie's, like the nicest person on the planet, right? And of course, Chester. So now, we're going to see if our thinking can change. Maybe it can, maybe it can't. I want for you -- and I've already put you into partner groups, some of you may be in a group of three. I would like for you to create, come to a conclusion about Chester pretending to be Melanie. And come to a conclusion about Melanie pretending to be --?

STUDENT: Chester.

BETH: Chester. And then we're going to see, are they similar? Does Chester think of himself in the same way Melanie does? Does Melanie think of herself in the same way Chester does? So for instance, Yousef and Luke, it says here, "Chester." So you are building Chester's view of --?

STUDENT: Melanie.

BETH: Melanie. Okay.