

Innovations in Thinking and Learning

Laura White – New Pedagogies for Learning

LAURA: When I think of the three pedagogies, when I think of NPDL, it really offers a lens for teachers to really think about, What are those learning opportunities that we're giving students? Why are we giving them those learning opportunities? And then when I think of the, How are we going to address this and build these skills along the way, or these competencies -- It's really the pedagogies of knowledge building, and the pedagogies of those I-Think strategies that help to really build those skills or those competencies of the 21st century learner.

Oftentimes we're learning about all these different pedagogies in isolation. And I think it's really thinking about how they play out during a deep learning opportunity. So where and when might I use the knowledge building? Where and when might I use gradual release of responsibility or explicit teaching? And it's really making those connections with teachers. And I think what's very cool is we're creating this networks where teachers are talking to one another, not just within their schools, but within other schools. And they're willing to share that information with others. So we've started to create a repository of deep learning tasks that we share with the entire board. And they're on a continuum as well. But those teachers have put themselves out there and are sharing their practice with the entire school system. So that's a very exciting thing.

With NPDL, when we're thinking about what are those learning opportunities that we're providing students and how do we develop the thinking throughout those rich and meaningful learning opportunities, we're looking at what pedagogical practices that we're using. Knowledge building really helps to create a community where students are able to use language and interreact and communicate with one another in ways that encourage the risk-taking; encourage students to share their ideas and to build on ideas and create new and innovative ways of looking at things. And when I think of integrative thinking strategies, they also help to develop those skills with students. So if we notice that students are struggling with recognising how somebody might feel the way they do, something like the Ladder of Inference would help to break down, like, those biases, those values, what data we're paying attention to and why. And how someone else might feel differently.

Some of the biggest changes that I've seen are teachers being very self-reflective. Where you might have heard comments before saying, "Maybe these kids aren't capable of doing this," and instead thinking, "Hey. Okay, so they weren't able to do it this way, what do I need to do so that they can master this or accomplish this or reach their goal?" The other thing I'm noticing is that students are achieving more than they thought

they were capable of. And so I think that was -- is very exciting to see. That the students can really take this in ways and in directions that we never thought possible.

I think these three frameworks really create thinking classrooms. We want students to be able to think critically. We want to think critically as educators, as system support people. And about what we're doing and why we're doing it. And I think when we use these tools in the classroom, we're empowering students with the tools that they need to really engage critically in the 21st century.

The integrative thinking, the knowledge-building, and the NPDL tools allow students to really engage with learning opportunities in a creative and critical-thinking manner.