

Innovations in Thinking and Learning

Jennifer Warren – Positive Problem Solving Using the Pro Pro Chart (part 3)

JENNIFER: You were working on the exact same task, thinking it through the eyes of the same stakeholders. But you have all come up with two different words at your tables. And that means is that we have great diversity when we go to solve this problem, in terms of how you're going to integrate the models into something that really doesn't exist yet. And that is pretty cool.

All right. So the last thing I'm going to do is talk about that step, integrating the models through pathways. And there are three pathways we can use to integrate these ideas. And the first one is called "double down." So when I'm doubling down, I'm thinking about under what conditions one model could generate a benefit for the other model. So I'm going to look deeply at Model A, for example, and say, I really like a lot about this. And in fact, there's a benefit that if I doubled down on that benefit, if I did that benefit more, I would be able to solve the problem. So that is double down.

The second pathway is called "hidden gem." And this is a great pathway if when we look at the two models, really most of the model is not what we would like to keep, but there's something in each model that we value a lot. And so I'm going to look at Model A and Model B, and if I could only keep one small element of the model, what could I build from that to create something new?

And the last pathway is "decomposition." With decomposition, I'm going to think about how I can reframe the problem so that I'm going to use each model in its entirety to solve different parts of the problem.

The pathway we're actually going to use to solve our problem is this one. We're going to use the hidden gem. And I want you, on a new piece of paper, to write this sentence: How might we create a better Welcome Week experience for grade nine students that will generate both -- and here's where you're going to put your two words in that you came up with, X and Y. Go ahead and do that now.

STUDENT: I would usually take the pros and cons list, and then you'd take the one tension and you'd make a pros and cons list, and take the other tension and make a pros and cons list. And then you'd just take the one with the most pros, and that would be your answer. Whereas this, you're completely dissecting, and you're looking at things you love.

JENNIFER: Your job now is rapid idea generation. I want you to use Post-It notes to generate as many answers to that reframed question as you can. And I'd like you to say them out loud before you slap it on the page, because when you say something out loud, it helps somebody else generate a new idea. Are you ready? Go!

STUDENT: Get people comfortable around their peers by doing ridiculous things.

STUDENT: Start of the year field trip and end of the year field trip with the entire grade.

JENNIFER: Imagine something. Take us to a carnival, or you know what I mean? Think of what the activity would look like that would give you involvement and comfort.

STUDENT: [INAUDIBLE] just for fun and not competitive. Remember how we did that at [INAUDIBLE], Alex, where there's basketball in the gym at break, and volleyball in the gym?

STUDENT: That was great. That was great.

STUDENT: Yeah.

JENNIFER: It's amazing sometimes what constraint does to creativity. We think that sometimes creativity just happens out of nowhere. But often, the biggest creativity comes out of constraints. And so I just constrained you with those three minutes there, and all of a sudden, a couple of tables were, like, an idea that you hadn't thought of before suddenly appeared. That was so cool.

Okay. So here's the next step. We are now at a place where we could solve this problem. I would like you to take a look on the page and talk together about which idea or ideas would you like to propose to the school. And so it'll be your task to create a pitch for our guidance counsellors, because they're actually redesigning what Grade Nine Welcome Week looks like as we speak, and they need new ideas. So here's the time to actually create the model.

STUDENT: That's why the 18-year-old sports clubs might be such a good idea too, because then you don't really have to try out. It's just for fun. Just a break. We did that at our old school, actually, and everybody loved it, and it worked really well. So at break they just say, "Basketball in the gym," or, "Volleyball in the gym," and you just go. In sports being on a team is always a really great way to create a bond also.

JENNIFER: I think, but non-competitive. Because if it's people who are not athletic, it's not possible for them.

STUDENT: We try to make it more open to everyone.

STUDENT: When you also empower other people, and you enforce their ideas, it's empowering to yourself as well, because you're just keeping the conversation going.

JENNIFER: So now that you have generated some cool ideas for our new model of Grade Nine Welcome, to build community, we have to ask this last question before you pitch your idea. What would have to be true for your new model to work? So I want you to think about your stakeholders that you named earlier, and for each stakeholder, what would have to be true for this model to actually happen at our school? Are you ready? Go.

STUDENT: So we have -- to find this opportunity for a fundraiser, such as the class is creating different ways of raising the leadership camp. We would also need people to run the leadership camp, the [INAUDIBLE].

STUDENT: Like the value advisors.

STUDENT: Okay. You would also need the value advisors to -- just need to run the year two camp and organize the games, and come up with different ideas.

STUDENT: When I saw these questions that we were learning today, I had, like, mine was set, one answer. That was it. But after doing all the different steps, I have now developed a new answer that combines both of them. And I think it's -- well, I know it's a lot better than my first answer.

STUDENT: How do you know it's a better model? It's a better model because it gets --

STUDENT: It incorporates everyone.

STUDENT: Yeah. It gets everybody from the entire school together, and then you get split into smaller groups that are just random groups. And then you have to get to know your group.

JENNIFER: I am so excited. I want to hear about what you've created. So Tristan, your group. Could I start with you? I want to know, what was your reframe question?

STUDENT: How might we create a better Welcome Week experience for grade nine students that will generate both involvement and comfort?

JENNIFER: Perfect. What was an insight that you had when you were going through this process?

STUDENT: We just wanted to find something that all teenagers could kind of bond over, and that everyone likes and could have fun with. And everyone could agree on it.

STUDENT: We also had the idea where we would do small ice breaker activities in your classroom, so you would get to know everyone in your classroom. But then we would also have these huge activities where we would get to know everyone with a good, deep connection.

JENNIFER: That's awesome. I'm going to come over to Jade's group next, right here.

STUDENT: So when we were looking at our things, we really wanted to make sure that students had free choice, and that they could better understand other people. Our idea was basically to randomly generate groups on Monday, and then in these groups you get a sheet that you had to fill out information for every single person in your group, so then you better get to know them.

I think it's a better model because there's parts from both of the different models, where you either stay in a huge group with basic conversation, or a small group where you understand people better, because there's everybody in the same place where you get to know specific people, and then you switch your groups every day so that you get to better know different people every day.

JENNIFER: So what is your reframe question?

STUDENT: How might we create a better Welcome Week experience for grade nine students that will generate both involvement and growth?

JENNIFER: Great. So what's an insight that you had?

STUDENT: So it occurred to us that we needed everyone to be involved in the activity. We also wanted the relationships between the various students to be deep and meaningful.

JENNIFER: How do you know that what you've generated here is a better model than what we had before?

STUDENT: This model, like, you would be talking to the people around you, rather than just talking to the people you've been talking to for the past eight years.

JENNIFER: That's awesome. Thank you. Thank you! That's what it's for. [APPLAUSE]

I just want to talk about how neat it was to listen to you go through this problem, and to work to get deeply into the problem. What surprised me about your thinking is that you've generated ideas that I would have never thought of, and also when you were thinking about the problem and getting deeply into it, the way you were able to articulate that problem was different from what I already had in my mind about what these two problems look like. And that's what I really like about integrative thinking, is that it really demands a lot of people collaborating together in a deep way to build on each other's thinking. And so I heard a lot of you saying phrases like, "Yes, and..." to build on an idea. And what that ends up doing is, it creates a pathway to insight. And every table had new insights. And I'm guessing -- would you agree -- that where you started at, and how you thought about this to how you think about it now after the process is incredibly different. Would you agree that that's pretty much true?

STUDENT: Oh, yeah.

JENNIFER: Really true, isn't it? I was just so fascinated that even for some of you, it was actually thinking about how a parent would care about a particular model, gave you an insight that led you to a better model later. And so I hope that you feel really proud of the fact that you thought very deeply about this, and that I'm really fascinated, and it gives me chills, to see the skills that you have, problem-solving, by thinking deeply about a problem. You were fantastic. So great work. Great work! Congratulations! Awesome! [APPLAUSE]