

## **Student Well-being: A Collective Responsibility**

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### **Embracing Shifts in Knowledge**

NOGAH KORNBERG: The way that the Ministry of Education is conceiving of well-being is intricately tied to the global competencies. The global competencies are reflecting the shift in how we think about knowledge and understanding. We used to think of knowledge as something static -- facts to be memorised, regurgitated on a test, then you know your things. And you can know how much you know, and that's all there is. What we know now is that knowledge evolves. That my understanding yesterday can be different than my understanding tomorrow, and there might be certain pieces of knowledge that are static. We know dates. I used to be a history teacher, so there are dates that will still be those dates. But there are stories around those dates. There are different perspectives on how to think about what happened in these moments. And that's what makes everything beyond the date and the place open to understanding and open to interpretation, which means that knowledge shifts. One of the reasons that it's difficult to shift from seeing knowledge as static to knowledge as something that's evolving is that what are the tools that help students be thoughtful about how they're understanding the knowledge? When I could just say what was on a test and just be like, "This date existed," it was easy. But now students can look at the same information and have very different understandings of what that information means. What we see with integrative thinking and the teachers who have used the tools is the tools help teachers make their thinking explicit. By being able to see students thinking, we can now talk about the model that the student has. We can ask questions about it, and the teacher becomes a very helpful guide and a very helpful critical friend to the students to say, "Well, is that the only understanding? Are there other understandings?" And when students are able to have their voice in these moments, when students are able to say, "Well, I used to think, but now I think, and here's why I've shifted my thinking," we start to see students who are building confidence and confidence in their voice. And that's the kind of classroom that you start to get such divergent ideas and perspectives, and that's where there's richness in learning. One of the lessons and activities we've seen teachers who use integrative thinking tools do is they ask students to state on a continuum from strongly agree to strongly disagree around a particular opinion or topic. Too often, where it ends is, "Well, why?" And students write a persuasive essay on why they think where they are at. What teachers who've been using integrative thinking have been able to do is say, "Okay, make your thinking explicit. Why are you in this position right now? Why do you think the way you think?" Now, let's go out and do some inquiry. Let's actually seek out other information, other pieces of knowledge from other students in the classroom, from new sources, from research, and now let's actually come back to this line and say, "Well, now where do you stand from the strongly agree to strongly disagree? And you can move if your

thinking has shifted that you have a different conclusion, or you can stay in the same place but often your rationale has changed 'cause you know more now." And this allows for students to be okay to change their mind. This is very reflective also of how a lot of adults operate in that we think that the answer we give has to be the right answer, and if we change our mind it's seen as a sign of weakness. And so, we become entrenched in the models that we hold because if I change my mind and say, "Oh, actually, that's something really useful to add," then we think we've done something wrong. That, "Why wasn't I this thoughtful before I heard your thoughts?" What integrative thinking classrooms create a culture of is that you want to learn from other people. You want to take the ideas of others, bring them into the way that you see the world in ways that are thoughtful, and as a result, build that cognitive flexibility that make it okay to not only have confidence in your voice today, but confidence in your voice as it shifts. What we've heard from students is that it offers them freedom. That isn't about the right answer. It also isn't about the right answer that the teacher wants. And we've even seen this working with elementary school teachers who say they so often hear students give them an answer that they think the teacher wants to hear. Instead, when the teacher really is curious about, "What is the student thinking?" And, "How can the student make their thinking explicit?" And, "How do we use that to guide the conversation?" Then students start to recognise their value in the classroom, that they're a contributing member of this community, and by being part of that community where their voice is listened to and trusted, they belong.