

# **KNOWLEDGE BUILDING as a way of CLASSROOM LIFE!**

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## **My Authentic Problem/Challenge**

I was noticing that my students seemed engaged in their own work but not really sharing for the collective good. I wasn't really sure how to address this but I knew I wanted to create a learning space that students felt accepted, safe to learn/share/collaborate and that all voices were heard.

## **My Goal**

I wanted to learn alongside my students and create a classroom environment where authentic learning challenges were embraced. I wanted to shift from a "ME to WE" philosophy so that collectively "WE" would all be responsible for gathering and sharing our knowledge in a meaningful way.

## **Promising Practices**

The push towards using Knowledge Building (KB) principles such as democratizing knowledge helped students engage in the work and by making our thinking visible through "wonder walls" and posting ideas using stickies. "We" started to ask more questions. I started to use provocations to spark interest/curiosity about a topic and as a way of moving away from "covering" the curriculum to "uncovering" our learning goals together using KB principles and stems.

## **Advances and Challenges**

Realizing that changing my teaching practice was only one small step in the process, and that leveraging the "Third Teacher" was a necessary next step to redefining our space and thinking. Next was the introduction of Real Ideas and Authentic Problems through the lense of Inquiry Based research. I wanted students to have a deeper understanding and become critical thinkers not just memorizing the curriculum. I wanted to promote a sense of wonder about the world and deliver content that was interesting to students. So, I started to guide students towards their own learning goals using questioning and encouraged them to form groupings based on interests. At first, this was hard for me to let go of the control and I wasn't really sure what my role was if I was always the one always imparting the knowledge. Through the support and guidance of my admin we were given an opportunity to further engage in our work as educators using the KB principle of Improvable Ideas. Our approach was to use timely descriptive feedback that would move our learners forward in their thinking and challenge them to go deeper (knowledge advancement) with their questions and research. The students were so engaged in their work and findings that democratizing their knowledge became a natural part of the learning process throughout their journey, not just a culminating piece of documentation. However the way they engaged in conversations was sometimes disheartening. They seemed to understand the notion of Idea Diversity but would try to oppose a conjecture, theory or idea by disproving peers findings in a competitive manner rather than a supportive one. So the idea of introducing the concepts of an Epistemic Agency and Building Knowledge Collectively using KB discourse were my next goals. Luckily, I was introduced to an interesting way to use the scaffolds called a "TOGO Table", this was a game changer for me and a logical next step to supporting students on this journey of building knowledge for the collective good. The "TOGO Table" was a way for students to offer ideas, build on knowledge in a collective way but they

could also disagree in a respectful way, with the purpose of moving the thinking forward rather than just to disprove a classmate's ideas.

### **Reflections and Next Steps:**

At first using the scaffolds seemed very prompted, almost scripted but over time I have noticed it is more authentic and a natural way to engage in meaningful conversations (e.g., "My idea is like ... because..." OR "I want to build on to ...idea"). In summary, I believe students feel that "WE" are better when we work together and that the knowledge is in the room. That "WE" should count on and appreciate others' talents/skills and that everyone can and should contribute to our learning. Lastly, that "WE" have the power to make a change in our thinking and share our knowledge using KB stems to agree or disagree respectfully and still demonstrate the notion that all voices mattered and were valued using KB. It is so refreshing to reflect and share how far we have come, but my journey is not over because in my current role as a teacher librarian and SERT, my goal has been to promote KB principles in an innovative space and through the use of technology. This has definitely been a SHIFT for me as I continue to learn and grow alongside my students on this KB journey.