

Building the Field

Edited transcript of Kelly talking about her thinking behind preparing a workshop for pre-service teachers on 'Building the Field'.

This is Kelly Carabott and I'm going to be talking through the ideas and thoughts and things that I considered when I created the workshop on the Teaching and Learning cycle: Building the Field.

I suppose the hardest thing with this particular topic was thinking about the teaching and learning cycle. Often when we first think of the teaching and learning cycle, it's often about, say, an informational text, which is quite easy to think about building the field for that type of text because it's building up content knowledge.

What was really tricky with this particular workshop was the fact that we were using a narrative and I really had to think about how I can build the field, building up prior knowledge on the picture story book 'The Coat'. Thinking about it ... the topic of self-esteem, resilience, building one's potential was highlighted. It became quite tricky when I had to think about how I was going to get students to think about building the field for that topic.

I actually found this quite challenging ... was I trying to think about building the field in terms of pre-service teachers' understanding of a narrative theme or was I focusing on building the theme so that they could think about how they would then use the kind of ideas that I had presented in their own teaching and learning cycle plans. So it took a little bit of working through. Anyway, this is what I came up with.

I loved the earthworm video. I think it's really great. The great thing I think about this video is its oral conversation that goes around the concrete experiences that are also visible within that particular video. So, I thought that was quite a strong video to start with.

I used Gibbons' work because I think that it's really important that I talk to the pre-service teachers about the importance of 'message abundance' and that, when we're building the field and when we're building knowledge about a topic, whatever that topic might be, it's really important that we allow students, through a multimodal approach, to be thinking about the many different ways that we can make meaning. It's really important that we give school students a whole variety of different ways to make meaning.

And then in that information transfer, so thinking about 'how do we then shift from that oral to the written?', For example, I think that ties back to the earthworm video where it kind of takes you through the oral stage at the start, moving back into the written and the importance of the oral communication around that.

Then thinking about pulling it together - and then there was Bev's slides about the picture story book 'The Coat.' I thought Bev's slides were really good in thinking about it in terms of the narrative and thinking about discussion of the theme of the

story. How do we think about the images in the story, how do we build up the knowledge about the field and how do we preview the story pre-teaching and key vocabulary?

I had to really think about how I could build the field thinking about before I read that text or maybe during reading that text. I particularly used videos in this particular instance because, up to that point, we actually hadn't used videos to kind of think about building up content knowledge. I wanted to make a connection that we could use. It wasn't just about reading another picture story book about that particular theme; that we could actually do it with videos as well. We could do it using pop culture.

What I was thinking about was touching on aspects of supported reading. So, getting students to maybe take notes, talk to the person beside them, all of those kinds of things that we do when we support reading...

Going back to 'The Coat', making connections between what we did with the videos, how we built up prior understandings and conversations around that topic and then going back to 'The Coat' and what we know about it. Again, that talking to learn is really important. Talking about language ... and then thinking about how we build the field in terms of language.

Thinking about theme came through quite strongly that we need to build up prior understanding of that theme. And then the video here, which was great, about how this is actually done within a classroom itself, and I find these videos have been quite good to support students' understanding.

Often what I've been finding is, when we've been talking about it in class, that we might show these ideas, but they then have difficulty then transferring that knowledge into what this might look like in a classroom situation. I think that the videos [Spiderman and The Mask] are quite good because what we've been doing is talking about them building the theme in terms of their prior knowledge. We're modelling that in terms of 'The Coat', so we're teaching them about the teaching and learning cycle through the teaching and learning cycle.

...what these videos then do is show them how they could use the teaching and learning cycle to teach that particular content... Thinking about interpersonal meanings, building the field again and then going obviously back to 'The Coat'... Touching on supported reading strategies within that particular document and trying to give them some support around what that might look like in terms of reading strategies.

What I then decided to do was think of some other themes. What I wanted to give the pre-service teachers was a whole variety of different ideas that they could use to build the field with their own students. What I thought I would do is actually get them to participate in some of these strategies within the classroom. I still used a picture story book because I wanted to relate it back to the narrative text. What I did is I chose a whole variety of different picture story books with quite strong themes and thought about what strategies could you use to build the field within that particular text, hoping that they would use their ideas in their unit plan and they would say, "Oh, I could use a see, think, wonder. I could use a KWL chart," for example.

Again, so I've gone through see, think and wonder, KWL charts, brainstorming, doing some mind mapping, for example, and again linking it back to those picture books. Say, one photo, Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge, where the forest meets the sea and what I tried to do here was also attach some aspects of supported reading. You could do some modelling about how we could take notes if we were to watch that particular video, for example. Think, pair, share, using the books of Flood. I then went through the unit plan and talked about that idea again of 'message abundance' and that, if we're going to build the field, it's done through lots of different ways. It's oral, it's maybe visual, it's maybe reading something linguistically, it's maybe doing some collaborative work. It might be doing individual work. Trying to get them to really think about the different strategies that are available to build the field.

That's my reflection, talking about 'message abundance' and, for me, 'message abundance' and talking about multimodality, getting them to think about if we take a multimodal approach to building the field, what we're actually doing is, we're giving students different modes to make meaning from, which to me relates to that idea of 'message abundance'.