

Dynamic Learning Scenario

Working Through a Hypothetical Challenge of Practice Critical Thinking Skills

When students were asked to examine points of view in a variety of texts, they showed some ability to identify the important values or issues. However, when asked to express an opinion or question ideas and actions in the text, many students offered “surface” responses that lacked detail and depth of critical insight.

As a learning team, our practice had been to co-construct answer criteria with students and to feature examples of model responses connected to the criteria on charts for student reference. We explored whether part of the issue may have been one of student engagement. We wondered: If students have more choices about how to communicate their learning, will they be more engaged? Would authentic opportunities to share with an audience encourage students to think more critically and voice more opinions with supporting ideas?

Through discussion, we formulated an “If ... then” statement, as follows:

IF we engage students by giving them opportunities for input and/or choices in how they communicate their learning about a topic or concept, and provide time for meaningful sharing with others,

THEN students will use the characteristics of the “text” form(s) they have selected to show their best critical thinking.

Further discussion as well as consultation with resources, including the Ontario Ministry of Education’s *Language Curriculum*, helped us define and add what we meant by “best critical thinking”: i.e., question perspectives of

a text and compare and communicate their personal thoughts, feelings and opinions relative to these.