

How effective are Ranking Ladders in promoting critical and creative thinking in my classroom? - Clair Wiltshire Skipper

Ranking ladder - "a graphic organiser used to order and prioritise the importance of each piece of information," (Quill & Townsend, 2009, p. 27).

Graphic organisers - "visual frameworks that assist those involved in learning to organize, clarify, connect, rank assess and evaluate their thinking,"

(Bennett, 2010, p. 4). **Rank Order**- "to rate, evaluate, weigh or judge in order of importance, value or size," (Bellanca, 1990, p. 2). **Criteria** - "ways, standards or reasons by which we measure or decide a ranking," (Bellanca, 1990, p. 2).



REFLECTIONS

In answer to my original question, I think that Ranking Ladders are a very effective way of promoting critical and creative thinking in my classroom, but that learners need to be explicitly taught how and when to use them. They also need lots of practise in using Ranking Ladders in different learning areas to become proficient users.

Ranking Ladders are best used in an authentic way to extend student thinking about a topic or issue, or as an extension activity for high-ability students.

Ranking the events of the *Georgette* Shipwreck story was too hard for many of the students. Most needed more practise before they attempted an individual ranking ladder at that level.

The Ranking Ladder could be made more user-friendly if the students were allowed to cut each rung apart so they could manoeuvre the pieces around and make decisions. Students could have a set of questions to ask about each rung and then their order can be decided. Having a ladder drawn on the page meant that students tended to fill the out the rungs from top to bottom instead of ranking the top and bottom first to set the parameters.

An electronic Ranking Ladder on the IWB may be a better way as it is easily manoeuvrable.

"If students rank ideas without justifying why they ranked them the way they did, then the power of a Ranking Ladder is greatly diminished" (Bennett, 2010, p. 61).

Ideas for future use of Ranking Ladders in my classroom:

- Ask students to list their learning goals and rank them in order of importance or most achievable.
- When students are proficient at using Ranking Ladders, look to merging them with a Fish Bone Diagram (Bennett, 2010, p. 186).
- Using Ranking Ladders as an assessment tool to evaluate a student's ability to operate in Bloom's evaluation level.

References

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