

Blooms Taxonomy Workshop - Introduction

One night in Mount Wolseley a few years back, shortly before I was to graduate the Instructional Leadership Programme I asked Barrie Bennett, “with which topic should I begin to teach students about the IL Programme”. His answer was immediately forthcoming and without hesitation, “Blooms Taxonomy, imagine the advantages to you as a second level teacher if all your students coming into First Year had already studied Blooms”. From that moment onwards I began to play with the idea of putting together a Blooms workshop. The first effort took place during the academic year 2013-2014 and I learned many lessons!!!!!! My colleagues and good friends Ciarán O’Muirgheasa and Lorna Wilson came on board. From our collective efforts the following incarnation of the workshop has evolved and this is the version we are using during the current academic year 2017-2018. I guess none of us have ever given an identical workshop two years running. Together we continually strive to make it a better and more effective experience for students and are always ‘changing, tweaking and updating’ in the hope of realising this objective.

You are free to consider our version as a possible guide to what you may choose to deliver to your own students. We feel a block of about four class periods of forty minutes each would be required to deliver the workshop and allow time for processing and reflection. Follow on exercises would be done later by our teacher colleagues, such as the creation in regular class time of subject specific Blooms Data sets with the students.

We try also to ensure that all Junior Cycle students have participated in the Blooms workshop by the time they get to mid-way in second year. We also evaluate their experiences in the aftermath of the workshop and after a further period we evaluate how their knowledge of Blooms has impacted their classwork, homework and answering of questions in exam situations. The process broadens for the students, as teachers in class link Blooms to wait time and apply Blooms to the creation of Graphic organisers such as Venn Diagrams where students immediately work at the analysis level of Blooms. Other graphic organisers may require the teacher to nominate a specified level of Blooms prior to creating the organiser such as a Fishbone Diagram. The need for different types of thinking by students, which would have been introduced in the workshop usually takes on a life of its own at this point..... The possibilities are endless!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

With good wishes,

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Possible Lesson Plan for a Blooms Workshop

Please note the following is a guide for the workshop as we present it, it may not suit everyone. It is used in conjunction with the distribution of the relevant sections of our booklet as we proceed through the workshop with our students. A core part of our workshop revolves around the story of Goldilocks and the three Bears, thus we acknowledge the inspiration provided by Barrie Bennett in the book 'Beyond Monet'.

Components of Possible Lesson Plan

Mental Set/Anticipatory set

Asking what the concept of "being a student means". Asking "what it means to think". Reference to possible comments on copies such as "should think more before answering question". Key part of being a student is answering questions. Ask for "situations in which students find themselves having to answer questions". After this workshop we should all be much better at answering questions.....

Sharing the objective and purpose of the Lesson

Objectives are listed on one of the early slides. The teacher may lead a discussion on how the listed objectives connect to their lives as students and why it is important for them to inquire into this particular area in order to fully live out the concept of 'being a student'

Input/Information

Core activity here involves the viewing of a video of 'Goldilocks and the three Bears'. Students are informed before the viewing that they will have to take an exam in the aftermath. Everyone becomes quite eager to answer the questions when given the exam paper but the exam is different ie 6 questions, one at each level of Blooms and events take a new turn where students have to think in a different way as they work in pairs on the exam.....

Modelling/Demonstrating

Please see the 'Road Maps' in our Blooms Booklet re. the depth of thinking students have to engage with in order to fully answer each question and how the 'Road Maps' link to the Blooms exam on Goldilocks.....

Checking for Understanding

Generally we use the 'Traffic Light' cards as we move through the workshop. Students are invited to display the cards on their desks as we proceed. A 'Blooms Data Set' on their Junior School, School uniform may also unfold spontaneously during the workshop leading to wide ranging discussion.....

Practise

Working in pairs the students take a 'repeat' exam on Goldilocks where they have to align each of the six questions with the appropriate level of Blooms. They are then given further data sets, one such as the Sales and Marketing exam which usually they would not have studied prior to the workshop and again they have to align the six questions with the appropriate level of Blooms. At least two further subject specific data sets are worked on during the workshop. This provides the opportunity for application.

Closure/Reflection

The last few slides illustrate how we do closure and reflection. Follow up classes after the workshop in regular subjects require the students to create a subject specific Blooms data set on a topic they have just finished studying in that particular subject. Discussion takes place in classes on linking Blooms to wait time before answering questions. Students may also be invited to draw a mind map on Blooms and/or create a poster on Blooms for classroom display.