

Drawing Out Confidence: How Creative Workshops Can Transform Student Presentation Experiences

Abstract

This case study demonstrates how an innovative workshop approach can transform traditional presentation experiences into engaging, supportive learning environments through creative storyboarding activities. By reimagining how students share their knowledge through informal, artistic expression rather than formal presentations, students develop both confidence and communication skills while maintaining high levels of engagement. The success of this approach is evidenced by strong student feedback, particularly from those who traditionally find presentations challenging, and the natural way peer support emerges through the workshop format. The case study examines how creating a "human environment where people begin to trust one another" can lead to authentic learning experiences. This approach suggests a model for other programs seeking to develop more inclusive and supportive ways for students to demonstrate their understanding beyond traditional presentation formats.

Keywords

Presentations, Creative, Inclusive, Sustainable, Technology-Enhanced, Collaborative, Problem-based

Overview

Dr. Danielle Hinchcliffe has developed an innovative workshop approach in an MSc Wildlife Conservation module that transforms traditional field trip planning into an engaging creative design exercise. The approach combines technological understanding,

creative expression, and practical problem-solving while addressing key issues of sustainability and inclusion in field-based learning.

The Challenge

Higher education faces multiple challenges in developing students' knowledge and professional skills:

- Traditional presentations create barriers for many students, particularly affecting those with anxiety, specific learning differences, or English as an additional language
- Formal assessment environments can inhibit authentic demonstration of learning
- Environmental impact and climate change concerns limit traditional field experiences
- Cost and resource limitations restrict practical learning opportunities
- Accessibility and inclusion issues affect both field work and presentation opportunities
- Time constraints in modules can limit opportunities for formative development

These challenges require innovative solutions that can simultaneously address environmental concerns, support inclusive practice, build student confidence, and create authentic learning experiences.

The Innovation

A five-hour workshop where students design a virtual field trip experiences through storyboarding. Key features include:

- **Creative Design:** Students develop detailed storyboards using traditional art materials
- **Technology Integration:** Incorporating various conservation technologies learned in other modules
- **Interdisciplinary Learning:** Connecting engineering, technology, and conservation
- **Student-Led Creation:** Freedom to design unique virtual experiences

- Informal Presentation: Non-traditional presentation format using projected storyboards
- Cross-Group Learning: Encouraged discussion and idea sharing
- Inclusive Design: Flexible participation options for all students
- Presentation: creative use of visualizers to allow students to share storyboards to the whole class.

Fig.1 Provides an example to help communicate the amount of detail included in each design. Each design is typically layout in 18 squares.

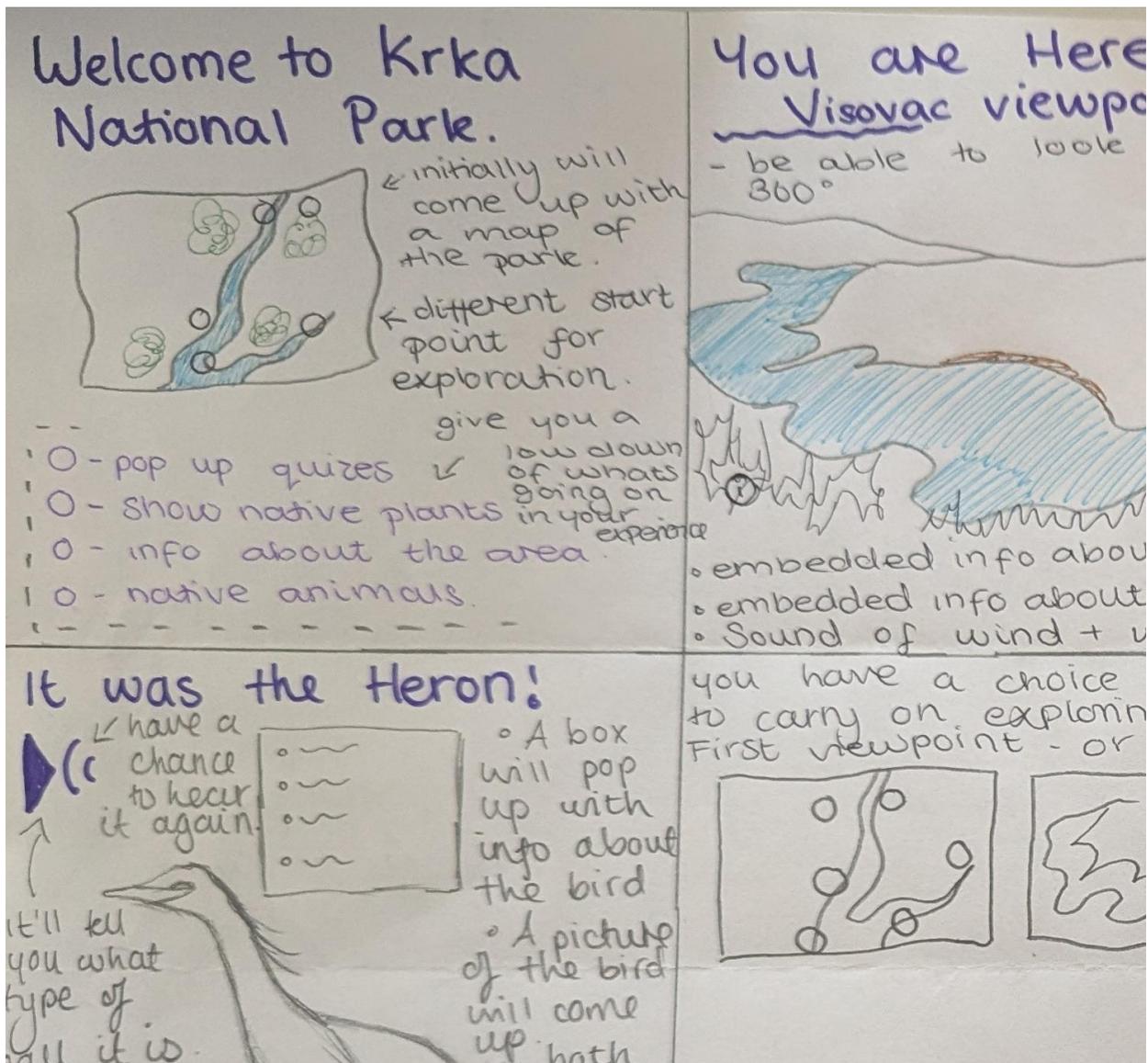


Fig.1 Excerpt from one of the designs showing the title square and other plans for activities.

Assessment Design

The workshop serves as formative assessment preparing students for:

- Module assessment (presentation on conservation technologies)
- Understanding of technology applications
- Development of creative communication skills

The design intentionally maintains an informal, non-assessed atmosphere which, as Dr. Hinchcliffe notes, "allows students to be more creative and take risks without the pressure of formal assessment."

The creative, in-person workshop reduces the negative use of large language models (AI) in several ways:

- Real-time demonstration of knowledge through storyboard creation
- Immediate verbal articulation of understanding during peer discussions
- Authentic presentation of personal ideas and experiences
- Development of work that cannot be easily replicated by AI

As the tutor notes: *"with us combating the troubles of AI... this would be a really nice authentic almost AI proof form of assessment."* The approach allows staff to see students' real-time thinking and decision-making processes, providing much clearer evidence of their capabilities than traditional written submissions. The workshop environment creates multiple touchpoints where staff can observe and assess student understanding - from initial concept development through to final presentation.

Feedback design

The workshop deliberately maintains a formative approach, creating a safe space for learning through continuous peer discussion and tutor feedback. As students develop their storyboards, the informal environment encourages natural knowledge sharing and self-reflection. Danni notes *"I'll just go around and continue, but I tend to find that they never really work in isolation. They chat to each other because that's just the nature of the workshop."*

The small group format and creative task design naturally scaffolds presentation skills - students move from informal group discussions to presenting their storyboards in a supported environment. This creates what one student with presentation anxiety described as feeling *"so comfortable... I can do this."* The format allows students to demonstrate both technical understanding and communication abilities without the pressure of formal assessment.

The workshop reveals learning through multiple channels: the storyboard creation demonstrates technical understanding, peer discussions show depth of knowledge, and the final sharing builds presentation confidence. Danni reflects: *"it's not sneaky as such, but it's my way of doing it without the students being aware... if they're showing me that they've got really good levels of knowledge of the tech, I can praise them and reinforce that. And if I find they've got incorrect information...I can try and fill those gaps."*

Impact and Outcomes

Student Engagement:

- High levels of creativity and enthusiasm
- Positive student feedback with it being "their favorite workshop"
- One student chose to pursue the topic for dissertation research
- Successful engagement of students with varying confidence levels

Learning Benefits:

- Enhanced understanding of technology applications
- Development of creative communication skills
- Improved confidence in presentation skills
- Better grasp of interdisciplinary possibilities

Wider Impact:

- Supports university climate action goals
- Promotes inclusive teaching practices
- Develops transferable skills for scientific communication
- Creates opportunities for cross-faculty collaboration

Success Factors

Several key elements contribute to the workshop's success:

1. Workshop Design:
 - a. Informal, creative atmosphere
 - b. Balance of structure and freedom
 - c. Clear connection to real-world applications
2. Delivery Approach:
 - a. Small group size (currently 11-12 students)
 - b. Continuous facilitator support
 - c. Peer learning opportunities
 - d. Flexible participation options
3. Integration with Curriculum:
 - a. Links to other module content
 - b. Builds on existing knowledge
 - c. Supports program learning outcomes

Challenges and Solutions

The main challenges identified include:

1. Scalability:
 - a. Currently works well with small groups
 - b. Would need adaptation for larger cohorts
 - c. Potential solutions include multiple facilitators or staged presentations
2. Student Engagement:
 - a. Initial reluctance to creative tasks
 - b. Overcome through professional context and examples
 - c. Flexible participation options
3. Resource Requirements:
 - a. Time needed for workshop delivery
 - b. Space and materials
 - c. Staff facilitation

Future Development

The approach continues to evolve with:

- Potential integration into undergraduate programs
- Development of digital sharing platforms
- Expansion of interdisciplinary connections
- Integration with research projects

Transferability

While developed for conservation education, the core principles could be adapted for other disciplines. Key transferable elements include:

- Creative approach to technical content
- Integration of sustainability concerns
- Inclusive teaching methods
- Formative assessment design
- Professional skill development

This case study demonstrates how creative workshop design can enhance student engagement while addressing broader educational challenges around sustainability and inclusion. The success of this approach suggests it could serve as a model for other programs seeking to develop innovative, inclusive teaching methods.

The workshop particularly succeeds in creating what Dr. Hinchcliffe describes as *"a very human environment where people are beginning to trust one another,"* allowing for authentic learning experiences that benefit both technical understanding and professional development.