



What Makes This TEAM Reflection Paper Successful?

Some specific examples/ evidence that contributes to the success of this paper are provided below.

Module 1: Classroom Environment

Grade: K/1

Subject: Morning Meeting

Criteria I: Development of New Learning (*How the teacher developed new learning and what was learned*)

How the teacher developed new learning:

- Read *Responsive Classroom Level 1 Resource Book* by The Northeast Foundation for Children, *The Morning Meeting Book* by Roxann Kriete, and *Rules in School* by Kathryn Brady, Mary Beth Forton, Deborah Porter, and Chip Wood
- Discussions with and observations of mentor
- Collection of baseline data; student participation in Morning Meeting

What the teacher learned:

- "I learned that sharing 'helps develop the skills of caring communication and involvement with one another, extends the knowing and being known that is essential for the development of community and for individuals' sense of significance, encourages habits of inquiry and thought important for cognitive growth, provides practice in speaking to a group in a strong and individual voice, strengthens vocabulary development and reading success.'"
- "I learned rules help to promote 'order, predictability, and trust in the classroom'... it is important for me to use reinforcing language when positive actions are noticed ... reminding other students of what responsible behavior looks like. Redirecting language is used when a student's behavior needs to be addressed and guided."

Criteria II: Impact on Practice (*How the teacher's practice is different*)

- "I held a class meeting to discuss our current Morning Meeting. We talked about what was going well and how we could work together to make it even better. As a class, we decided we wanted a place where everyone felt safe and important."
- "I guided the students in rephrasing the rules in the positive. For example, instead of "don't get up to go to the bathroom" we chose "stay at meeting." We then narrowed down our set of expectations to five main rules. The Morning Meeting expectations are 1. Stay in your own space 2. Participate 3. Be respectful 4. Listen to the speaker 5. Be responsible.
- "In order to foster a sense of order and student responsibility on the way to Morning Meeting, I decided to use a transition song. When the students hear the song *Skip To My Lou*, they have until the song is over to put away their journals and get ready for Morning Meeting to begin. I also assign seats so that the students know exactly where they are to go and who they are to sit next to."

Criteria III: Impact on Students (*How student performance/learning has improved as a result of changes in the teacher's practice*)

- "Another positive change ... is the number of students who actively engage in positive interactions with each other. I counted positive interactions between students during Morning Meeting by collecting data on the number of students who questioned or commented on a share. The average number of students who questioned or commented on a share went from 2 to 8."
- "Students are staying on topic and talking less about themselves when they ask a question or make a comment. Overall, the students have increased their ability to listen to each other, an important social skill. "
- "As a result of the changes in Morning Meeting, students demonstrate respectful behavior, are better listeners and the number of teacher redirects per meeting has decreased from 9 to 2."

Indicator 3: Teachers promote student engagement, independence and interdependence in learning by facilitating a positive learning community by: providing explicit instruction about social skills to develop students' social competence and responsible and ethical behavior by using a continuum of proactive strategies that may be individualized to student needs

Goal:

I will learn strategies to incorporate and reinforce social skills, self-regulation, and responsible behavior during Morning Meeting, so that students actively participate in activities that promote positive social interactions.

Initial Summary:

For many of the students in my K/1 integrated day class this is their first school experience, and they do not have the skills to positively interact with each other. I noticed while I was interacting with students and modeling socially competent behavior, I was not incorporating explicit instruction and reinforcing social skills. While the teacher and student interactions were positive, positive interactions among all students was not evident. I had already implemented Morning Meeting but did not feel it was as effective as it could be. During Morning Meeting, there are three students who generally initiate and lead discussions. I intend to learn and implement strategies to incorporate everyone in our activities and routines. I realize there is a lack of connection/interaction between students; they are not looking at the student who is speaking. The children seem disengaged and uninterested. I plan to foster positive interactions with peers and promote engaging interactive conversations among all students.

Reflection Paper:

Development of New Learning: My learning began with a discussion with my mentor about what I wanted my classroom environment to look and feel like. I decided that I really wanted to work on creating positive interactions among students. Given that my class is young, I felt it was important to teach them how to interact with each other. We looked at the performance profile together and decided that working on Indicator 3 would be most effective in creating a positive classroom community.

I began collecting baseline data on every student participating during Morning Meeting: the number of students who said "pass" instead of sharing, the number and names of the students who were questioning and commenting on a share, and the number of redirects (looking at the speaker, and responsible, ethical behavior).

In order to further my understanding of Morning Meeting and the Responsive Classroom approach, I began reading, discussing, and applying three books. The first book I read was *Responsive Classroom Level 1 Resource Book* written by The Northeast Foundation for Children, Inc. I learned more about the foundations of the approach, the guiding principles, and outcomes. It surprised me that one of the guiding principles of the Responsive Classroom approach was "how we, the adults at the school, work together is as important as our individual

competence: Lasting change begins with the adult community” (Northeast Foundation for Children, Inc.). I came to understand the importance of positive interactions between adults in the building to promote a school community. I also learned that the more these guiding principles are understood throughout the school as whole, the better the outcome.

I also read *The Morning Meeting Book* written by Roxann Kriete. The book discusses the main purposes of Morning Meeting and addresses the need for students to be motivated, feel a sense of belonging and to have fun. The main goal of Morning Meeting is to “set a tone for respectful learning and establish a climate of trust” (Kriete, 2002). As I thought more about the main goal of Morning Meeting, I aimed to have these principles extend beyond Morning Meeting. I wanted to be able to incorporate social skills to help promote positive interactions between students. I learned that sharing “helps develop the skills of caring communication and involvement with one another, extends the knowing and being known that is essential for the development of community and for individuals’ sense of significance, encourages habits of inquiry and thought important for cognitive growth, provides practice in speaking to a group in a strong and individual voice, strengthens vocabulary development and reading success” (Kriete, 2002).

The book *Rules in School* written by Kathryn Brady, Mary Beth Forton, Deborah Porter, and Chip Wood was helpful in furthering my knowledge of fostering appropriate behavior. I learned rules help to promote “order, predictability, and trust in the classroom” (Brady, Forton, Porter & Wood, 2003). The book discusses the 3 Rs of teacher language. It is important for me to use reinforcing language when positive actions are noticed. I recognized that by stating how a student was self disciplining, it was reminding other students of what responsible behavior looks like. Redirecting language is used when a student’s behavior needs to be addressed and guided. In addition to my reading, I met with my mentor teacher to discuss how I could establish a positive environment in my classroom through the use of Morning Meeting. I observed her Morning Meeting and noted specific strategies and procedures I felt would be beneficial to apply to my classroom. Based on my readings, observations, and ongoing discussions with my mentor, I decided to implement several new ideas.

Impact on Practice: I held a class meeting to discuss our current Morning Meeting. We talked about what was going well and how we could work together to make it even better. As a class, we decided we wanted a place where everyone felt safe and important. In order for this to happen, we generated a list of Morning Meeting rules. I guided the students in rephrasing the rules in the positive. For example, instead of “don’t get up to go to the bathroom” we chose “stay at meeting.” We then narrowed down our set of expectations to five main rules. The Morning Meeting expectations are 1. Stay in your own space 2. Participate 3. Be respectful 4. Listen to the speaker 5. Be responsible. Each of the expectations were modeled and practiced. The students discussed what each of the Morning Meeting expectations looked like and sounded like, then drew a picture of each expectation. I posted the pictures and meeting expectations near our meeting circle, so that the students would be visually reminded each morning.

One of the strategies that my mentor uses is “whole body listening.” After observing her, I decided to implement this strategy in my classroom. The main goal is for the students to be able to understand what it takes to be a good listener. Listening is one of the social skills that I am focusing on. The students and I discuss what each part of the body should be doing during this time to ensure all ideas are treated with respect, regardless of the differences in backgrounds, interests and ability. Some of the comments included; legs are still, hands on our laps, eyes on the person who is speaking, voices are quiet, our brains are thinking about what is being said and our hearts are caring about what is being said. I encourage students to participate in whole body listening as best they can and to the best of their ability. Each time we get to Morning Meeting, I ask students to remind me what each body part is doing and say the names of students who look like they are “whole body listening” throughout the meeting. In addition, I have begun to use whole body listening during other times throughout the school day, like Reader’s Workshop and Math.

In order to foster a sense of order and student responsibility on the way to Morning Meeting, I decided to use a transition song. When the students hear the song *Skip To My Lou*, they have until the song is over to put away their journals and get ready for Morning Meeting to begin. I also assign seats so that the students know exactly where they are to go and who they are to sit next to. I did not want the students constantly sitting next to the same people, so I used one of the strategies from *The Morning Meeting Book* written by Roxann Kriete. She suggested that if the class needs assigned seats, the teacher should rotate these assigned seats biweekly. By doing this, the students know where they are expected to sit, but are able to sit next to different students every other week.

So that all students participate during our share portion of Morning Meeting, I now give students an alternate question to answer. I ask the students a lightning quick share question like “what is your favorite holiday?” and then give them a back-up question. For example, I say “if you cannot think of your favorite holiday, tell us your favorite color.” I also ask students to close their eyes after they hear the questions and to pop their eyes open when they know what their response will be. This helps me to know when students are ready to share and limits the number of students who “pass” because they need more time to think of a response.

In order to address the issues with questioning and commenting after each share, my mentor suggested having students put a thumb up if they were going to ask a question or share a comment another student mentioned first. For example, if one student comments that they think another student’s share was really interesting, anyone else who also feels the share was interesting can silently put a thumb up.

The Morning Meeting Book written by Roxann Kriete discussed the importance of having a class discussion about questions and comments. As a class, we discussed what a good question is and what a good comment is and why. I modeled asking questions and giving comments to demonstrate positive interactions. Next, the students practiced commenting and questioning with positive interactions. The students and I discussed what should happen if they are not chosen to question or comment on another student’s share. Together, we brainstormed other times of day that would be appropriate to ask a question about a share or comment on a share brought up during Morning Meeting. The class decided that snack, recess, lunch, and dismissal were appropriate times to bring up or continue a discussion on a share.

Impact on Students: During this module, I focused on incorporating and reinforcing social skills and responsible behavior during Morning Meeting to promote positive interactions between students. By hanging up the Morning Meeting expectations poster, students know the teacher's role and their role as students in order for everyone to feel safe. The students take responsibility for their actions and feel a sense of ownership over the rules since they created them. By phrasing the rules as "expectations" students understand that this is what we expect in Room 8 so that everyone's need to feel important and safe can be achieved.

In my opinion, implementing "Whole Body Listening" helped to promote responsible behavior by decreasing the number of redirects I give during Morning Meeting. Before creating the expectations poster and adopting whole body listening, I redirected students an average of 9 times throughout one Morning Meeting. Now, the number of redirects per meeting has decreased to an average of 2. I am consistently reinforcing students who are behaving responsibly.

I found it interesting, as the number of redirects decreased, the participation of the students increased. By providing the students with another question they were able to answer during share, the number of passes decreased. Initially, there was an average of 6 passes during the share portion of Morning Meeting, now they are down to 0. I believe the students were able to have more time to think since I began asking them to shut their eyes and think about what they wanted to share. With the responsibility on the students, there is a sense of order and predictability in our daily routine. More students are willing to participate when other students are behaving responsibly. This shows how important it is for the students to trust each other and feel comfortable in their environment.

Another positive change I saw in my students is the number of students who actively engage in positive interactions with each other. I counted positive interactions between students during Morning Meeting by collecting data on the number of students who questioned or commented on a share. The average number of students who questioned or commented on a share went from 2 to 8. The "thumbs up strategy" during comments and questions has limited the number of repeats. It has created a positive environment where all students feel involved. Allowing for participation, even if students did not think of a specific question or comment to share. Students are paying more attention to other students and know whether or not to put a thumb up.

By having a discussion and modeling for students, it has helped them to identify what a good comment or question is. Students are staying on topic and talking less about themselves when they ask a question or make a comment. Overall, the students have increased their ability to listen to each other, an important social skill.

After the students understood how to question or comment, they were more eager to participate in this part of Morning Meeting. In addition, providing students with an alternative time to further discuss topics brought up during Morning Meeting, helps them to interrupt less. As a result of the changes in Morning Meeting, the students demonstrate respectful behavior, are better listeners and the number of teacher redirects per meeting has decreased from 9 to 2.

I am finding students are excited to come to Morning Meeting. Positive interactions are occurring between students, not only during the meeting, but also throughout the school day. The classroom learning community is positive and feels safe, due to the social skills and responsible behaviors developed during Morning Meeting.