

Sample Beginning Teacher Journal ^{7/20/12}

Module One – Classroom Environment, Student Engagement and Commitment to Learning

Sample One – Grade 4, Reading

Beginning Teacher Journal

Use My Personal Journal to record specific and detailed information and examples related to your module work. Your Journal should include descriptions of such things as

- How you developed new learning, e.g., readings, conversations with your mentor and other colleagues, professional development activities;
- How you applied your new learning and what happened as a result,, e.g., how your practice changed, the impact on students; and
- Your ongoing analysis and reflection related to successes and continued challenges, cause and effect thinking, insights and /or concerns.

You will use the specific examples/evidence from your journal to help you determine if your professional growth plan is working or if it needs to be modified.

10/8/12

Understood most indicators. I was able to give examples to support some descriptors but will try to get more specific information for Indicator 4. Will look for patterns when Gabrielle and Andy are or aren't following classroom rules.

I may be making assumptions that kids know how to do the work when they don't.

I'm going to look more closely at my organization of materials for reading class.

Need to get some baseline on actual interruptions and engagement.

10/14/12

Have observed that Gabrielle seems to have more trouble and cause disruptions while actually engaged in activities. She always wants my attention and needs reinforcement so often that she keeps interrupting.

I think that if I can get Gabrielle and Andy focused that it would make a big difference and help the rest of the class stay on task.

These students seem to be a lot less mature than I was expecting them to be.

Tally of interruptions during reading - 28 in 30 minutes. Planned on doing tally for entire period but had to stop.

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10/15/12

Discussed Professional Growth Activities with mentor and decided on several to try – need to share plan with Principal. Asked mentor for suggestions on where to start – I need something soon to help students with organization and behavior. Mentor said that one of the chapters in Marzano’s book is about student responsibility – she suggested I read that chapter first.

10/17/12

Read some of Marzano's two books this weekend and liked the idea of starting daily classroom meetings with my students. Will begin tomorrow. Also read that providing a clear purpose & guidance both academically and behaviorally would have a noticeable impact on achievement. Want to explore this idea more.

10/18/12

Started daily classroom meetings and got students to identify and prioritize student rights and responsibilities. Of course, they kept interrupting with barely related stories they wanted to tell me. How do I show them that I am interested in them but that these stories and comments have to stop or be saved for another time?

10/19/12

During today’s classroom meeting, students continued making a Bill of Rights for the classroom. Even though this is only our second day, I heard one student begin to remind others about not talking at the same time! Several students volunteered to make posters to hang in classroom.

My mentor, Jen, and I talked about wait time, providing feedback, validating student responses and providing reinforcement by attributing ownership of ideas to the students who initiated them.

10/20/12

When rules are not being followed, I am beginning to ask the class to identify how behavior is or is not consistent with our class rules and what they need to be doing differently. This seems to be more effective than simply telling them they’re not following rules. Will continue to reinforce rights and responsibilities by linking examples of classroom behavior to rights described on class posters.

10/22/12

After discussing Marzano’s six strategies, I decided to focus on three of them by reading them in detail and trying them out in the classroom.

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I told Jen that I had already started with classroom meetings and having the students develop a classroom Bill of Rights. I hope this approach will continue to establish everyone's right to learn and will help the students be involved in giving feedback to others when someone is off task and distracting them. Jen asked if I had noticed a difference in student interruptions. I need to do another tally next week.

Jen suggested that I try to observe Mr. Diaz's classroom meeting next week.

10/25/12

Some students are using language from posters with others; some students still talking too much when I'm with another reading group.

Students refer to Bill of Rights poster more often during reading – and other parts of the day, too!

10/26/12

Observed Mr. Diaz's class today. Noticed that one of his students facilitated their meeting. Maybe I should ask him about this – I've been leading our classroom meetings. Everything seemed to flow in his class. It's obvious that he knows just what he's going to do, how he's going to do it. Everything's prepared. He was interacting with the kids before class started and then they got right down to business.

I'm going to make an effort to really be prepared for reading so I give the same messages and can focus on what we're doing/learning and not worrying about materials, groups, etc. At lunch, Jen and I talked about how she uses a "status of the class" to help her stay on top of her reading groups. I'll give it a try.

I've noticed that they really like hearing their names credited for ideas, and I think that this strategy is beginning to increase participation. ("I was listening to Zach's group and he said something interesting. He said that Don really didn't have a choice. Why do you think he said that?") It's helping me give reinforcement and recognition for engagement rather than giving them attention for interrupting.

10/28/12

Gabrielle did not interrupt reading groups 2 of last 4 days. In total, 20 interruptions during 30 minutes of reading. Perhaps disruptions are because some groups started with new books and it took longer than I had planned to pass them out to each group.

10/29/12

Students seem to have forgotten all about our Bill of Rights! I can't believe this was the same class! Jen reminded me that students are excited for the upcoming weekend. She encouraged me to continue with classroom meetings next week. We talked about some of Marzano's other strategies and how to implement them. Will use classroom meetings to involve students in discussing goal to reduce interruptions.

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11/3/12

School psychologist observed Andy today. Will meet with her tomorrow to discuss her thoughts about him.

Students are asking if they are meeting the goal of less than 15 interruptions in 30 minutes. Will review totals from each day with them on Friday.

11/4/12

I realize that many students respond to class poster of rights and responsibilities, but didn't realize, until after meeting with school psychologist, that some students might need their own visuals at their desk. I need to continue to work with Andy to make sure he understands the lesson.

As result of meeting with the school psychologist, I will put Gabrielle and Andy in different groups, provide them with own desk chart of classroom rights and responsibilities poster and will try to use pre-teaching with Andy when I introduce new strategies.

11/5/12

Class was excited to learn that weekly average was 14 interruptions during 30 minutes of reading. Not sure if I should challenge them next week with fewer interruptions during 30 minutes or for entire reading block???

Met with mentor and literacy specialist to review School Improvement Plan related to Grade 4 literacy goals. Was led to explore Reader's Workshop and Nancy Boyles' reading strategies in her book, *Constructing Meaning*. Re-visited comprehension strategies for use when understanding breaks down; connecting, visualizing, wondering, predicting, noticing & figuring out. Will continue using strategies with students and begin to emphasize integration of more than one strategy to encourage independent work and on-task behaviors. Will explore Reader's Workshop and Accountable Talk phrases at a later date.

11/9/12

Using ideas from Nancy Boyles' *Constructing Meaning* book, I introduced strategies and reviewed with whole class. I posted strategy charts and began to identify strategies to use to gain better understanding while reading.

I didn't realize how much Gabrielle and Andy were feeding into each other's being off-task – separate groups has helped each with more positive role models.

11/10/12

I gave each reading group a graphic organizer to help focus their thinking. I previewed the graphic organizer for Andy's group with him. In each group I discussed the purpose for integrating reading strategies. While Andy interrupted my introduction with the rest of his group (need to work on this), he did not interrupt once during the activity using the graphic organizer.

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11/11/12

No reading groups today – school assembly.

Since Gabrielle likes to get attention by talking, I've paired her with a newer student with limited English proficiency. The ELL teacher did some activities with both of them and Gabrielle can work with Matt at the end of the day if her work is completed.

11/19/12

Interruptions during reading group continue to decrease! Classroom meetings continue, but I'm feeling overwhelmed with the number of things to cover with my students each day! I will talk with Mr. Diaz about whether he continues to have classroom meetings daily or if it might be possible to meet only a few times per week. Jen was supposed to observe today, but was out sick. Will reschedule.

11/30/12

Have reinforced reading strategies over a two week period. Student interest was high due to some familiarity with strategies from previous years. Focused more on strategy choice(s) and integration of strategies as appropriate for specific text. Students are talking to each other, but they are discussing their assignments vs. being off-task. Tiffany, who never contributed unless I called on her, is participating in group discussions using the wondering strategies. (A real success)

Pre-teaching has helped Andy to focus more on his work and be more on-task. Gabrielle is more on-task in new reading group. This reminds me of what I read in Marzano's book about not treating all students exactly the same, especially when dealing with challenging behaviors.

I need to think about my Reflection Paper. I realized that I haven't recorded weekly averages for interruptions in a couple of weeks. Need to do this next week. So many things to do!

12/3/12

Class average number of daily interruptions this week was 7 in 30 minutes!

Things I want to include in my reflection paper:

- Lessons learned by reading Marzano's book, observing Mr. Diaz, and numerous conversations with my mentor
- Bill of Rights and how I shifted responsibility of identifying how behaviors were or were not consistent with our document and the impact, especially on talking and interruptions
- Crediting students for ideas and how this got some of them more involved
- My own preparation and how this allowed me to be more focused on the learning and provide time to interact more informally to get to know the kids – importance of knowing the kids
- Specifically mention Gabrielle and Andy – their differences and how I used different strategies for behavior/engagement
- Impact of Boyles' strategies on student engagement – Tiffany
- Final count of interruptions to compare with initial count
- Next steps

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I need to add more detail in my reflection paper to support the conclusions that I have drawn. Add more “reflection” to summary. I noticed a connection between Indicators 4 and 2. As I’ve worked on classroom rules, student engagement has improved.