

Reflection Paper

Subject: Classroom Environment

Grade: First Grade

Module 1: Classroom Environment for Active Learning : Teacher implements instruction in order to engage students in rigorous and relevant learning and to promote their curiosity about the world at large by:

Selected Indicator: 4. Fostering appropriate standards of behavior that support a productive learning environment for all students

Goal:

I will improve my ability to foster appropriate standards of behavior through explicit communication and consistent reinforcement. As a result, students will demonstrate expected behaviors according to the established classroom rules or expectations thereby creating a conducive and productive learning environment for all.

Initial Summary:

In the beginning of the school year, my students and I explicitly discussed the rules and expectations that should be exhibited in the classroom and in other locations in the school building. Students are reminded of these expectations every day in order to help daily routines run smoothly and effectively. There are five students who are still in need of constant reminders throughout the day to follow directions and to show appropriate behaviors. Due to the difficulty these students are having showing appropriate behaviors, I frequently stop to redirect them, which results in loss of classroom productivity. Through observations I am unable to pinpoint an exact time of difficulty for each individual student.

Students who follow school-wide PBIS rules and expectations are rewarded with certificates for being safe, respectful or responsible at the monthly pep rallies. They also have an opportunity to become ambassadors. In our classroom, I implemented the idea of "Bucket Fillers," where I teach the students what it means to be kind to one another and how their acts of kindness, "bucket fillers," can impact their day. Still these same five students consistently fail to respond to these incentives. In order to reach my goal, I need to redirect student behavior when necessary and consistently enforce appropriate consequences.

Reflection:

To help determine the indicator I wanted to focus on in Module 1, I began reflecting on my teaching and the areas where I could improve and gather

additional knowledge. I reflected on my students' behavior in the classroom and the impact it had on my instructional time. I used the CCT Performance Profile to identify my professional growth focus while exploring my current practice and reviewing the profile continuum for each indicator. After reflection, I selected indicator four as my focus, which promotes a productive learning environment through students' positive behaviors, aligning with the rules of the classroom. This focus would enhance my ability to improve the students' behavior so that the delivery of my instruction would be smooth and effective.

I began my new learning by talking to several colleagues about effective management strategies and techniques to help minimize behavior interruptions. As I collaborated with my colleagues, I was better informed of my school's PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions and Support) rules and expectations. The school's PBIS rules and expectations emphasize being safe, responsible and respectful, not only in the classroom, but in all areas of the school. After meeting with the social worker at my school, it was recommended that I create a behavior chart for one of my students who struggled to follow the classroom rules, regardless of numerous reminders. To be effective, the expectations for earning points needed to be explicitly stated. I then used hand signals to represent each rule: safe, respectful and responsible. I modeled these for the class when a rule was broken and had a discussion regarding it and how it could be fixed.

By becoming more knowledgeable of my school's PBIS expectations I was able to collaborate with the specials teachers to create common expectations. Through the understanding of the PBIS expectations, I am able to acknowledge students for their positive behavior. Another impact of being more knowledgeable about these expectations is that I am able to have a stronger understanding of what behaviors are acceptable and appropriate ways to reinforce them. With a clearer understanding of these rules, I feel more comfortable providing correction and feedback to the students. This has helped me to become more consistent with reinforcing rules and expectations.

The impact of my greater understanding of PBIS on my students has been great! Through my learning and understanding of the PBIS expectations, my students were able to understand quickly what was acceptable behavior and what was not. They quickly began using common language such as: safe, responsible, and respectful. They have connected these words to their actions on a daily basis. When they got spoken to, they were able to identify the general rule that they had broken and to decide how they could fix it. They began to reflect on their behavior and how it impacted their learning and their classmates' learning. They helped each other monitor their behaviors and started giving signals to one another. Through their use of silent hand motions, it became easier to keep them on task and continually helping one another to stay focused.

In addition to this learning, I was offered an opportunity by the fifth grade teachers to learn about an online behavior-monitoring program. This program is called Class Dojo. As I watched my colleagues present, they showed that students could receive points for positive behaviors matching our school-wide PBIS expectations, as well as negative points for inappropriate behaviors. The teachers showed how to display the behavior monitoring log on the Smartboard for students and teachers to see. I discussed this strategy with my grade level partner as well as other colleagues who had been through my classroom. After reflecting on this presentation and discussions with several colleagues, it appeared that this might be a good tool to use to meet the needs of my students who were still struggling to adhere to the classroom and school rules.

The impact on my practice of learning about the Class Dojo program was that it helped me monitor the students' behavior more consistently. I had the opportunity to assign positive and negative points to different behaviors, immediately. Through this program, I was able to customize the behaviors that are recognized to match the needs and skills that were being addressed at the given time. Having Class Dojo displayed on the Smartboard, reminded me to be consistent with holding the students accountable for their behaviors. This behavior management program allowed me to pull up a child's daily log to identify more specifically the behaviors they exhibited, as well as the time of day that was most challenging for them. Targeting the time of day helped me to provide additional motivation to the students so they could earn a fun activity or break.

Class Dojo had a positive impact on my students. They thrived when Class Dojo was displayed on the Smartboard in between lessons. It was a visual reminder of the rules and expectations they needed to follow. They got very excited when they heard a "ding" and saw an extra point next to their name for a specific behavior. Surprisingly, they adjusted well when they received negative Dojo points. They were quick to respond that they were being unsafe, disrespectful or irresponsible (not handing in homework, not completing work, talking during independent work). The students were also aware that their individual reports would be sent home to their parents. They knew they were being held accountable for their behavior. They knew that they could work toward a specific number of points per day as well as per week to earn rewards for their behavior. Students took on more responsibility, including moving themselves away from friends who were talking without being asked to. Implementation of Dojo prevented interruptions during lessons and whole group conversations.

The last part of my new learning was developing a behavior plan targeted toward a specific student. When collaborating with the social worker, school psychologist, principal, and math coach at my school they expressed the need for data collection to track behaviors over time. This collection of data would allow me to assess the impact of the plan. We decided that the tracking the behavior during specific activities would have the greatest impact on changing the behavior. Being able to target the specific activities where the most disruptive behavior was shown provided me the opportunity to provide more incentives that would be handed out immediately following the difficult activity. We also focused on one specific behavior, which would be more manageable than looking at several behaviors in need of correction.

I quickly realized how important it is to have a successful behavior plan. I researched this and found, through www.schoolpsychologistfiles.com, that "knowing how to create and properly utilize behavior plans can improve the classroom atmosphere and teacher satisfaction" and that "they serve to teach and reinforce positive behaviors and are a way of documenting the success of the intervention."

The impact on my practice was significant. Creating a behavior plan targeting the student's specific behavior allowed me to track the negative behavior as soon as it started. Generally, this indicated that the student was not receiving explicit directions or warnings. By filling out the behavior plan it held me accountable to be consistent with providing him the two warnings prior to receiving a negative Dojo point. By connecting the behavior plan to data entered on Class Dojo, I was able to get a clear picture of the student's behavioral successes and weaknesses. Once I identified the times and activities that prompted the misbehavior, I was ready to redirect the student or encourage the student to buddy up with someone in his group to complete his work.

After examining the behavior chart, I determined that the student's negative behavior often occurred during independent activities. One specific time that appeared to be the biggest challenge for the student was during our special, music. With the data to support this, I was able to address my goals with my student and provide him with a reward. Furthermore, I met with the music teacher to ensure that we were on the same page with regards to the behavior chart and expectations.

Class Dojo and a personalized behavior plan had a significant positive impact on the student's behavior. After implementing the behavior plan and keeping myself consistent with his consequences and praises, he made tremendous progress. His negative and unsafe behaviors were minimized, maximizing his learning time and that of the class. Through immediate praise and recognition for his positive behaviors, he was able to monitor his behavior and keep it in check. The harder he tried, the more he was rewarded and the better his behavior became.

My student responded positively during activities that were not teacher directed. He enjoyed having a goal to work toward, such as coloring time, visiting the social worker and/or the math coach. These were his favorite activities and were wonderful incentives to help get him through the challenging activities.

As a result of some of the difficult behaviors being shown in my classroom, my principal suggested that I become a member of the Behavior Intervention Team (BIT). During these bi-weekly meetings, the team discusses concerning behaviors being exhibited in their classrooms. As a team, we continue to discuss different strategies to help manage the disruptive behaviors. Although not all of the behaviors presented in the meetings are the same as those presented in my class, I received great insight. I know that, no matter how many years I teach, disruptive behaviors will be present at some point in my classroom.

Being part of the BIT has had a significant impact on my practice. I have able to make lists of inappropriate behaviors and strategies to help manage them. The opportunity to work with other teachers who have many years of teaching experience has been inspiring. BIT has provided a new perspective to old problems. I have been able to bring in some of these strategies to work with my students who have a difficult time adhering to the "Bucket Filling" and school-wide PBIS expectations. My students have noticed that I continue introducing new consequences for behaviors (both positive and negative). They also noticed that positive behavior was expected school-wide.

As stated, my goal through module one was to improve my ability to foster appropriate standards of behavior through explicit communication and consistent reinforcement. Reflecting on the continuum of effective teaching, I saw that student behavior in my classroom was interfering with the emotional and physical safety of others. By implementing the PBIS rules and expectations, Class Dojo, a student behavior plan, and joining the BIT, I believe I have successfully reached my goal. I am now confident in redirecting student behaviors when necessary and in consistently enforcing appropriate consequences.