

## TEAM - Module 1

At the start of this module, I shared my frustrations with my mentor about my students' lack of effort to assume responsibility for their learning. We used the *Common Core of Teaching (CCT) Performance Profile* to analyze what may be happening and what may be changed instructionally to improve student effort and sense of responsibility for learning. I recognized that while I expected students to take responsibility for non-instructional tasks such as taking lunch count and passing in homework, I was giving them limited responsibilities to do this during instructional tasks (*Classroom Environment; Indicator 2*). When making decisions about learning, I was doing all of the work and students were only asked to listen. I began to contemplate how I could help my students self-monitor and assume responsibility for their own learning. I realized that in order for this to happen, I needed to allow students the opportunity to have ownership in their learning process.

A major source of my new learning was reading, synthesizing, and applying strategies presented by Robert Marzano in *Classroom Management that Works*, specifically chapter 4: *Teacher-Student Relationship*. I learned that preparing and practicing appropriate questioning scaffolds students' thinking to "dig deeper" into their thoughts. In other words, helping students anticipate what to think about helps guide their learning. Marzano also suggests to use and model specific learning behaviors that communicate how to reach the learning objective. For example, Marzano suggests presenting the questions that are going to be asked and discussed throughout the lesson at the beginning of each lesson. I learned that it is more effective to provide the questions ahead of time, rather than waiting for students to ask them. In doing this, students are exposed early in the lesson to essential questions connected to the learning objective. With this strategy, students are beginning to monitor their learning.

I applied Marzano's concept of modeling specific learning behaviors to meet the needs of my students. During a math lesson on finding the common denominator, I used the SMART board to display *guiding* questions that I would be referring to throughout the lesson. The questions included: how is solving fraction equations similar to solving whole number equations? What is the first step when adding or subtracting fractions with unlike denominators? How do you add and subtract mixed numbers with unlike denominators? During the first few days of this approach, I did not notice any change in the students' responsibility and effort. For instance, they did not seem to be paying any attention to the questions

that were displayed. After a full week of implementing this strategy, I began to notice that students who were not always confident to participate voluntarily began to do so! Their questions and ideas sparked further discussion about the learning objective and students began to develop richer discussions by feeding off each other's ideas.

I continued implementing guiding questions and began to incorporate self-monitoring strategies into my lessons. A self-monitoring strategy that I incorporated into my instruction was teaching students how to use post it notes while reading. Students are self-monitoring their comprehension as they write predications, questions about the text, and connections. These strategies encourage students to place emphasis on essential learning components in a way that makes sense to them. As self-monitoring strategies were practiced and utilized when introducing lessons, I began to notice students using them on their own. In particular, students underlined important information in the question, attempted answering the question using prior knowledge, and reflected on how they derived their answers. Through this practice, I discovered that more students answered the questions correctly. Furthermore, I saw that students who typically lacked confidence with participation began to feel more comfortable sharing their ideas and answering questions.

As part of my new learning on student engagement, I chose to observe a few colleagues during their literacy instruction. Through these observations, I learned ways to hold students accountable for their own engagement during a lesson. I noticed that a kindergarten teacher asked every single student in the class to identify a letter and their sound rather than asking for just one volunteer or the whole classroom at once. The teacher also arranged the students in a circle where she was able to make eye contact with each one. Through these simple techniques, students anticipated that they were going to be called on, enabling their engagement and focus on the lesson. The teacher's eye contact with students was a clear sign that their attention was expected.

As I reflected on my new learning, I recognized that I needed to provide ways to support students' accountability for their own learning. Specifically, when I call on students to answer a question or add to the discussion, I want them to think about what they already know about the topic in order to formulate a sensible answer. I do not want students to shrug their shoulders and give up. To support my students' accountability, I decided to do an experiment that gave them an opportunity to experience the difference between active listening and passive

listening. I explained that active listening is when you are thinking about what the presenter is saying and making connections in your mind. I modeled active listening by addressing a question about a familiar story that the class had read. I thought aloud about what I already knew about the genre and what the story reminded me of.

Later that day, I had the paraprofessional in my room work with a small group of students, where she began to speak loudly. Meanwhile, I was conducting a lesson on the essential components of a well written reader's response. I explained that they needed to provide at least two specific pieces of evidence from the text to support their answers. I then instructed students to return to their seats and answer the reading question that was written on the board. Many of them raised their hands and asked what they were supposed to do. They immediately asked for help and were very noisy. While reading their written responses, I recognized that their explanations to the question were of poor quality and there was nearly no evidence to support their answers.

The following day, I instructed students to sit on the morning meeting rug in rows facing me; I wanted students to recognize that I was monitoring their engagement and effort throughout the lesson. I began to conduct my lesson on the essential components of a well written reader's response. During the lesson, students were actively listening, making eye contact and participating. I then instructed students to return to their seats and answer the reading question on the board, just as they had done the day before. This time, students were quieter and busy working. I noticed students were using the graphic organizer that was discussed in the lesson effectively and fewer students asked for my assistance. As I was reading over the students' work, I noticed a drastic improvement compared to their previous day's work; this time, students restated the question, clearly responded to it, and provided supportive evidence to support their answers.

Later that day, the students and I reflected on the differences between the two lessons. Students explained that during the previous day's lesson, they were distracted by the paraprofessional talking with other students. They described that the overall noise level in the room escalated and their interest in the lesson quickly dwindled. I revisited the word self-monitoring and reiterated that self-monitoring is a skill that we acquire enabling us to think critically about our behaviors and whether or not we are on task. Self-monitoring can help us monitor what we understand and what we do not. We continued to discuss behaviors and strategies that we can practice to foster self-monitoring. Students suggested

raising their hands to ask a question, asking for another example or to rephrase the question, making connections, visualizing, and taking notes. The students and I compared the effects of actively listening versus passive listening. Students explained that when they are actively listening they are enabling their understanding of the learning objective. In addition, they are making an effort to pay attention, make eye contact with me and are assuming greater responsibility for their work. In conclusion, I discovered that actively listening helps students self-monitor.

I continued to learn about promoting student engagement and responsibility in the learning process when I participated in a school-based professional development workshop focused on Debbie Diller's literacy strategies presented in Practice With a Purpose: Literacy Stations. The workshop facilitator stressed the importance of shared learning between the students and teacher. This is done through the "I Can" list where students and teacher create a list of meaningful literacy strategies that can be practiced at each work station. The purpose of this list is to give students ownership of the decision making process and to foster responsibility for their own learning. Throughout the workshop, I wrote several questions: How will the students continue to grow as readers? How will I know they are really doing their work? How will they be held accountable for their learning? As I continued to listen and reflect on these questions, I visualized my students working at literacy stations and using the strategies that I modeled through mini lessons. I realized that just like teaching a new reading strategy, I had to model what to do at the literacy stations, what resources to use, how to challenge ideas, and how to be responsible for personal learning. I began to realize that self-monitoring is a process that needs to be continuously practiced, guided, and supported.

As I continued to build on my new learning about self-monitoring, I decided to focus on one literacy station at a time. I started with the nonfiction literacy station. I identified specific goals I had for my students within this literacy station that specifically aligned with the state and district curriculum standards. The goals included determining the main idea and the author's purpose, identifying text features, using informational text for specific reasons, and taking notes. Each day I would conduct a mini lesson where I would model and think aloud about the learning objective and why it is important to their reading development. I taught a lesson on determining the author's purpose in an informational text. I used an article from *Time for Kids* to model and think out loud how to identify important ideas and clues within the article. I also modeled how I could self-

monitor my understanding of this information by facilitating a discussion with a partner, writing about it, organizing the information on a graphic organizer, and taking notes.

After conducting various mini lessons on non-fiction reading strategies, the students and I created our "I Can" list for the non-fiction station. To my surprise, students were very eager and excited to offer ideas about what they could do while visiting the non-fiction station. Some of their ideas included, creating a KWL chart, identifying text features, taking notes on a topic of choice, writing about the text in their own words, discussing the topic with a partner, and using reading comprehension strategies. I recognized that students were interested in creating the "I Can" list because they were being held accountable and were given ownership for the creation of the station. Through previous mini lessons and modeling of non-fiction strategies, students were supported and confident in their ideas.

When the literacy station was finally open and available to the students, they were self-monitoring their understanding by utilizing strategies from the mini lessons. I watched a group of students choose to read a kid's page from the local newspaper. The first thing they did was read the title of the article. They then began to make predictions as to what this article may be about. They proceeded to discuss the photograph and caption in the article. One student took out a sticky note and wrote down his prediction. I was very pleased to see that students were taking ownership and responsibility for their own learning. Their realization of the importance of assuming responsibility began to become evident through their ability to pick and choose strategies with which they are comfortable of completing successfully, while still practicing meaningful literacy skills. Students began to take pride in their work during literacy stations by demonstrating effort and excitement for their learning.

As well as fostering self-monitoring skills and effort, I wanted to encourage more students to challenge themselves and demonstrate responsibility for their progress as readers. I had been observing students during independent reading time and noticed that many students were not really reading. I also observed that some students were reading books that were either too hard or too easy for them. While I want students to be interested in what they are reading, I want them reading at their reading levels. Through discussions about book browsing techniques and individual conferences with students, I learned that my students were not setting meaningful reading goals. More importantly, I began to recognize

that goal setting is a vital tool to help students develop responsibility for learning and self-monitoring.

With a new perspective on goal setting, I asked students to set a reading goal for themselves at the beginning of the literacy block. I strategically chose this time to set goals because students are engaging in multiple literacy activities. On the first day of goal setting, I modeled how to write specific and obtainable goals. We discussed how some goals can be met after one day of working at the literacy stations while another goal might take a few weeks to achieve. I modeled a scenario where I read a book on my reading level and used sticky notes before, during, and after reading to self-monitor my understanding. This modeling was to teach students what a meaningful literacy goal would look like.

I then instructed students to write a one to two sentence goal they wanted to achieve during literacy stations. On the first day of goal setting, students were writing goals that were not very specific, yet I decided to let students validate their goals for themselves after literacy stations. Meanwhile, during literacy stations, I observed students working on achieving their goals. I watched one particular student working very diligently at the fluency station. He had set a goal to increase his fluency rate by timing himself as he read. He did this three times on the same passage and he watched his oral reading rate improve each time! After each day of literacy stations, students would reread their goals and had to determine if they met their goal, how they did this, and how they will set goals to challenge themselves. Each day we discussed and evaluated our goals, students seemed to put more effort into their reading tasks and practice at the literacy stations. I recognized that students were self-monitoring themselves consistently - it was becoming common practice without even realizing it. Consequently, students needed less redirection and teacher guided instruction for independent and cooperative tasks.

During this module, I have focused on promoting engagement and shared responsibility for the learning process including providing opportunities for students to initiate their own questions and inquiry (indicator 2). Through the support of different resources that encouraged me to reflect on the teaching and learning within my own classroom environment, I learned to provide students with strategies and multiple opportunities to monitor their own learning. I recognize that students learn and self-monitor in a variety of ways and that it is my job, as their teacher, to support them in doing this. I have also discovered that students

demonstrate more effort and sense of ownership when they are involved in the decisions of the learning process.

While my students' sense of responsibility for their own learning and overall effort level has improved, I want to see it continue! Self-monitoring their learning is a process that I want students to continue to explore and develop. My goal is to continue to model self-monitoring strategies in social studies and science, enabling students to generate and investigate their own ideas through discussion and research. I have sought professional development opportunities from my principal and will continue to do research on self-monitoring or setting goals. As I prepare my fifth graders to move on to middle school, I want them to continue to validate their understanding using strategies that I have instilled in them as well as ones they have learned through experiences.