

Reflection Paper

Subject: Reading and Literacy Stations

Grade: Kindergarten

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: 5. Maximizing the amount of time spent on learning by effectively managing routines and transitions

Goal:

I will learn and apply strategies for maximizing the amount of time spent on learning during literacy work stations, and as a result, students will remain engaged and focused on the presented learning task.

Initial Summary:

In reflecting on the effectiveness of routines and transitions within my classroom, I have noticed that students are requiring many redirections and additional modeling of the routines at each literacy station. I modeled the appropriate procedures for each station at the beginning of the year, yet students still remain off-task and have a difficult time problem solving independently. I consistently remind students of the procedures at each station, yet students continue to remain off task and cause interruptions during small group instruction. I often need to redirect students selecting the incorrect materials or using them inappropriately and needed to do this on average 8 times within a fifteen minute period of time. I am also losing quality instructional time due to transition time. On average, it takes the class one minute and twelve seconds to transition between each of the three literacy stations.

Reflection:

Prior to beginning research and development pertaining to the routines and transitions within my classroom, I spent a great deal of time reviewing and analyzing the pre-existing routines and transitions during literacy work stations. As I began conversing with my mentor in regards to my placement on the continuum of effective teaching, I realized that although permanent stations were already present throughout the room, students were not making use of the provided materials. I also grew aware of the fact that instructional time was being lost due to the need to redirect students through transitioning between stations. Although I modeled this at the beginning of the year and discussed the rules with students, I was still experiencing an excess of interruptions. After reflecting with my mentor, I was able to receive a variety of resources which would support my growth across the continuum.

Through resource seeking and professional discussion with my mentor, I was directed towards Robert Marzano's text entitled Classroom Management That Works. In this text, I learned a great deal of valuable information pertaining to establishing effective procedures and transitions. Marzano suggests that "designing and implementing classroom rules and procedures has a definite effect on student behavior...rules and procedures should not simply be imposed on students. Rather, the proper design of rules and procedures involves explanation and group input" (Marzano 15, 16). In reflecting on Marzano's findings, it is evident that students must become active members in participating in the creation and establishment of classroom procedures. While involving students through input and the design of procedures, they are able to foster a sense of ownership and understand reasoning for the need within a classroom environment. In reading about the design process, I also was able to comprehend that classroom procedures should be negotiated between the teacher and students to increase motivation among both parties involved. In discussing the creation process of classroom rules and procedures, Marzano suggests, "before addressing specific rules and procedures with students, it is useful to have a discussion regarding the fact that many situations in real life involve rules and procedures" (Marzano 26). This allowed me to grasp a deeper understanding of the importance of a teacher's use of effective strategies in formulating procedures as well. Upon reflecting on the new learning I had acquired from Marzano's text, I began to think of ways in which I would be able to implement such research based findings in regards to classroom routines and transitions.

After tracking and analyzing student behavioral data, I noticed that the majority of interruptions during literacy stations resulted from the students' inability to follow an established procedure. Once I read Marzano's text, I decided that I needed to institute clear, concise procedures for each independent station. This in turn, enabled the students to provide input into the design process. As a class, we met to accomplish this task, and in doing so, students were able to state their ideas of important steps required for completing each task at each individual station successfully. Throughout this process, I ensured that I formulated a discussion with students linking the importance and necessity for procedural aspects within the classroom as well as in their real world experiences. All ideas were recorded for students to see on chart paper to aid in the students' ability to form a sense of ownership and pride. Once this process was accomplished, I had students turn their attention to a specific station, where I modeled the proper procedures of completing academic tasks that aligned with those the students had suggested. I then selected several volunteers to demonstrate and model the same procedure that I had modeled.

Once students had revisited the procedures and rules of each particular station, I began to notice a decline in the number of interruptions in the listening station more so than other stations. Students remained engaged in the text and had fewer issues in regards to operating the CD player for the accompanying audio track. The interruptions soon dissipated, for prior to applying this new learning, students at the listening station were causing a total of five interruptions. After applying Marzano's suggested strategies which employ proper creation and implementation of procedures, the number of student interruptions decreased to one. As a result, students remained engaged in listening to the audio book and were able to complete the task. Overall, student interruptions across all stations decreased from twenty in a sixty minute period to ten interruptions.

Two additional resources in which I experienced new learning from were both observational in nature. The first observation was of a colleague's routines and transitions during literacy stations. Through this observation, I noticed that my colleague had created clearly defined stations around the room which were conducive to the students' transitions and learning process. All materials appeared readily available with accompanying labels for students to utilize throughout their time at each station. Students remained on task and were able to independently select the appropriate

materials without teacher intervention. At the end of each station, students quickly and efficiently put their materials away in the proper designated area. The second observation resulted in formal feedback from my school's administrator. During a reading period, the principal observed literacy stations in my classroom and met with me to reflect as a shared effort. During this meeting, the principal discussed benefits of having students in the independent reading station read their books in an alternate setting until they demonstrated proper use and selection of materials. Many of the interruptions during stations were occurring at the classroom library, where students were to be whisper reading either independently or with a buddy. We discussed the benefits of this gradual release method in moving students temporarily until mastery of the routines had been displayed, and conversed about my concern for the students need to remain on task.

Based on the new learning that I had acquired from my colleague and principal, I determined the need for proper placement of stations and materials. In setting up the classroom for literacy stations after my post observation conferences, I decided to have students read on the rug across from the library rather than in the library itself just as my administrator had suggested. I modeled the new location for students and reiterated the importance of selecting texts that are appropriate for use. I then selected volunteers to demonstrate what both independent and buddy reading should look like in the new designated area. In addition to this, I narrowed the number of texts that students had to pick from in this station. I was finding that students were spending most of their time in the station choosing a text rather than practicing their reading strategies. Students were also creating many interruptions during this station due to arguments over the texts. Therefore, I modeled situations such as these with the students to formulate alternative methods in coping with a slight disagreement during literacy stations.

Once the reading station was moved, and I altered the location and selection of materials students were provided with, I began to notice a decrease in disruptive behaviors within the independent/buddy reading station. Students appeared on task, and valuable instructional time was not lost in redirecting students and addressing inappropriate behaviors pertaining to the utilization of materials. In addition to creating a positive impact on student engagement, this modification within my classroom instruction also led to shorter transition times as students rotated through the three stations. Students were able to quickly select a book from the provided book boxes and settle into whisper reading with minimal distractions and interruptions. Prior to employing the suggested strategies, students were taking an average of two minutes and three seconds to fully transition from one literacy station to another. After I had applied the new learning acquired from observational means, I noticed that the average transition time among students within stations decreased to forty-eight seconds. This improvement is greatly attributed to the shift of material placement and station location as well as increased teacher and peer modeling.

After reflecting on the observation and conferencing with my colleague on the effectiveness of the smooth transitions and lack of interruptions, she directed me to Debbie Diller's text entitled Literacy Work Stations: Making Centers Work. In Diller's text, I learned a plethora of information pertaining directly towards the creation of effective literacy stations. While discussing the importance in selecting appropriate leveled texts for students participating in literacy stations, Debbie Diller states, "when the task is too hard, when the children don't thoroughly understand the task, or when the purpose of the task is unclear, the result is often off-task behavior and teacher interruptions" (Diller 8). In supporting Diller's claim, I had observed that my colleague had provided students with individual book boxes for the reading station. This enabled the students to locate and select texts which are instructionally appropriate and prevented students from reaching the frustration level in reading. The book boxes were also readily available for students arriving to the stations and took little time in returning to the proper location.

After I observed my colleague and read Diller's text, I determined that a major source of establishing smooth routines and transitions is that of proper placement and selection of teaching materials. With this new learning, I decided to create book boxes for each individual student within the classroom which align directly with the students' data driven instructional reading level. In doing so, I made sure to provide students with an appropriate number of leveled texts, both fiction and nonfiction, to accommodate varying interests and promote on-task behavior in the independent reading station.

In addition to utilizing relevant, student created rules, proper positioning, and material distribution during literacy stations, I also learned the importance of allowing students to experience choice. Robert J. Marzano and Debra J. Pickering explore this research based finding in the text The Highly Engaged Classroom. The authors state that "choice has an effect on a variety of outcomes. Specifically, choice seems to increase intrinsic motivation, effort, task performance, and subsequent learning"(Marzano and Pickering 14). The authors discuss the positive impact that providing students with a choice pertaining to their learning tasks and materials has on the overall student learning experience.

While applying both Marzano and Pickering's research based findings within my classroom, I decided that I would need to add to the students' learning experience through the choice model. In doing so, I purchased individual book boxes for each student within the classroom. While creating the book boxes, I reflected on Marzano and Pickering's findings on the importance of choice in terms of student engagement, and ensured that I filled each student's box with books that explore topics of interest to the student. The book boxes serve as a mobile library containing an assortment of leveled fiction and nonfiction books specific to each learner. I modeled the appropriate use of the book boxes and designated an accessible area where students would be able to quickly and efficiently locate them for use. In another effort to apply this new learning, increase the level of student engagement, and decrease interruptions, I added a variety of audio books to the listening station for students to choose from that pertained to the specific area of study.

As I observed students rotation through literacy stations after the implementation of Marzano and Pickering's strategy of choice, I noticed a decline in the amount of student interruptions. Interruptions at the reading station decreased from an average of three interruptions within a sixty minute period to less than one. As a result of this new strategy, students remained actively engaged and seemed to thoroughly take pride in their work. They seemed to enjoy the sense of independence gained from selecting their own audio book within the listening station.

Throughout this process of professional growth, I have come to learn a great deal of valuable information pertaining to management of the students within my classroom. I have also noticed many positive changes in student engagement through the use of effective routines and procedures. As I look back to the Continuum of Effective Teaching, I am able to see a progression in my personal growth as an educator. With the decrease in interruptions and redirections overall, I am no longer continually losing instructional time in correcting student behavior or guiding students through the process of problem solving. Although materials were readily available for student use prior to this experience, I did not have an established procedure for their use in completing tasks. After researching strategies of effective routines and transitions, I found that with clear, concise instructional arrangements, students remained engaged in the learning task. In reviewing the data collected thus far, I feel as though my students are moving towards independence with no teacher intervention throughout routines and transitions. Overall, the total transition time decreased from two minutes and three seconds to forty-eight seconds, and the number of interruptions decreased from fourteen to five within a

sixty minute period of time. As I continue my teaching career, my goals are to continue to seek resources that improve routines and transitions within the classroom. I wish to enhance student achievement by encouraging students to remain actively engaged through the use of effective teaching strategies.