

Reflection Paper

Subject: Reading/Math

Grade: Two

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: Promoting engagement in and shared responsibility for the learning process including encouraging opportunities for students to initiate their own questions and inquiry

Goal:

I will research and implement strategies for making classroom decisions, classroom goals, as well as, personal student goals. As a result, students will set classroom goals for homework completion, encourage students to set personal academic goals in reading and math, and set math fact fluency goals.

Initial Summary:

As I began to think about my second grade classroom and the indicators in Module 1, I wondered how I could promote a positive learning environment and which indicators could help me achieve this goal. After reviewing each indicator and talking with my mentor, I found that indicator 2 would help me focus on creating this environment, would help my students initiate their own questions, and share in the responsibility of the learning process. I decided to primarily focus on involving my students in classroom decisions and having them set personal goals. I wondered if my students set their own goals, what kinds of results would I see, how would they grow, how would these goals change the classroom environment, and how would these goals change me as a teacher? I knew that in order to help me answer these questions, I would need a better understanding of how to set student goals. I began to research and read articles from Seigle and Marzano, as well as, speak with our Math curriculum coach and grade level colleagues. Next, I began setting classroom rules, setting classroom expectations for reading centers, and having students document their math fact fluency using a bar graph. I wanted these goals to be attainable and make them within student's reach.

Reflection:

In my classroom I noticed that my students enjoyed making decisions about classroom management, liked feeling that they had ownership of the classroom, and taking responsibility of the learning process. Through these observations, I wondered if they would equally enjoy setting personal academic goals, as well as, see how their goal setting affected their learning.

To help further my understanding of goal setting I began to do some research on this topic. I read an online article called "Students Set Goals" (Siegle, 2000). In the article it talked about setting goals that would be attainable for the students and that the goals should be within the student's reach that would require reasonable effort. I felt that the best way I could achieve this would be by focusing on the student's math fact fluency. Every few weeks, my students take a timed fact fluency assessment in which there are 100 addition or subtraction problems. This assessment is practice that leads up to a benchmark assessment that they will take later on in the year. When my students took this assessment, I noticed that they were overwhelmed by the number of problems, were nervous to take this test, and dreaded having to take it. I knew that I wanted to make this process less overwhelming and to make this assessment more meaningful for them. I felt that the best way I could achieve this would be by having my students graph their results. In the Siegle online article, I learned that one way students can recognize their growth was by using a bar graph. Knowing that this was the direction in which I wanted to go, I also met with our Math Curriculum Coach and spoke with her to get some feedback. We agreed that this would be a great way for my students to document their growth. My Math Curriculum Coach also indicated to me that this bar graph would be a great tool for my students to use to set fact fluency goals. Through these conversations and research I knew I needed to take every opportunity to help my student's document and recognize their growth in math fact fluency. I was also hoping that through this documentation, I would see my student's confidence grow and this would build future success.

To begin this goal setting process with my students, I talked with them about the observations I had seen when they took this fact fluency assessment and they agreed with my comments. I then presented to them my idea on graphing their results and setting personal goals. We discussed what "goals" were and how these graphs might help us with fact fluency and how graphing might help them feel less overwhelmed with the whole test. Next, I showed them the graph that they would be using. Each student would have their own graph; one graph for addition problems and one graph for subtraction. I found that this bar graph was difficult for them to understand and it took more time than I thought for them to comprehend how to use it. I learned that next year when presenting graphing our results, I will use a bigger graph and I will use the Smart board to model my results. I also learned that once my students became familiar with the graph, they became more comfortable using it.

Once my students became comfortable using the graphs, I noticed that they were excited to take this fact fluency test. The feeling of being overwhelmed by this test previously was replaced with enthusiasm and anticipation. They would talk to one another prior to the test, talking about how many more problems they wanted to get right this time. The students were also excited to graph their results and see their progress. After graphing their results, they enjoyed sharing their progress with me and with each other. Through these discussions, remarks would be made about what their goal would be next time they took the test.

Over a two month span, graphing their results not only showed the students their progress but it showed me how their confidence grew as well. I noticed in particular a growth in confidence and progress in four students, Bob, Bill, John, and Alice (not their real names.) I looked particularly at these students because I had noticed that they showed weakness in fact fluency. Looking at their addition bar graph results, Bob jumped from only being able to get 3 answers correct out of 50 in the beginning to being able to answer 29 out of 50. Bob was also less anxious when taking this test and a sense of "look what I can do" was clearly seen on his face once he began to see his progress. Bill went from being able to answer 26 out of 50 to answering 40 out of 50 on the first side and 30 out of 50 on the second side of the test. In the beginning, Bill wasn't able to complete any facts on the second side of the test. The smiles and high fives from Bill showed me how confident he had become and how important graphing results were.

John also saw some steady growth, he jumped from 42 out of 50 to 47 out of 50 correct and he even was able to do one problem on the other side. Alice also saw steady progress; she started out with 46 out of 50 to 50 out of 50. She is working on the goal to now complete some problems on the other side. Without these graphs, my students would not be able to see their progress or take complete ownership of the results.

While researching setting goals I learned from Marzano that feedback should be timely. Marzano talks about "the timing of feedback appears to be critical to its effectiveness. Feedback given immediately after a test-like situation is best. Providing students with feedback immediately after a test has the largest effect size." (Classroom Instruction that Works, Marzano, 2001) I learned that these bar graphs results became my student's feedback and because it was immediate, we could see its effectiveness.

In addition, these graphs became useful data for me because I was able to see which of my students needed extra support in their fact fluency. It also showed me that this additional support was making a difference in their results. This data also helped shaped how I could differentiate classroom instruction. When I first thought about implementing these graphs in my classroom, I never realized what an impact they would have on my students and how I looked at my teaching. I have learned that I will use this strategy in years to come because I have seen the effectiveness in it.

Through my research on setting goals, I learned from Marzano that students should be encouraged to personalize goals set by the teacher. "Once the teacher has established classroom learning goals, students should be encouraged to adapt them to their personal needs and desires." (Marzano, 2001) In the beginning of the year, I had already established a classroom expectation about weekly homework. I had begun to notice that some of my students were not completing their homework and I wanted to motivate and encourage all of my students to turn in their weekly homework pack. So I thought about what I had learned from Marzano and I wanted to expand upon that learning. I began to talk with various colleagues about how they set goals in their classrooms and how their students personalized goals. I found many interesting ideas from using paper clips to chart progress to putting marbles in a jar. I realized that whatever my colleagues were using was working for them because it came from their students. I knew that I needed to turn to my students, to see what motivated them. Since graphing their math facts worked so well and the students had such a vested interest in this task, I decided to create a class size graph/goal sheet to be displayed in the classroom.

I knew my students enjoyed making decisions about the classroom, therefore I presented the homework problem we were having and my idea of what the solution could be to the class. After introducing the problem and idea to the class, my students were very enthusiastic about it and were anxious to develop solutions, create a goal, and call it their own. They decided that each week the students turned in their weekly homework packet they would earn a star. The star would be placed on a graph sheet and displayed for everyone to see. We also discussed how long we would track their progress and what they might earn if they completed their goal.

The students decided that they would graph their results for twelve weeks and they would want to earn a special activity if and when they accomplished their goal. Next, the class determined three activities that they would like to do. Then they voted on which activity they would be working toward over this twelve week period. Each week they earned a star they would become excited and discussions would develop about how many more stars they would need to reach their goal. On weeks that they did not earn a star, they would be disappointed but would motivate one

another to try again the following week. I also noticed as we got closer to the end of the week, students would remind one another of the goal and about earning a star.

As of yet, my students have not accomplished their goal. I have observed that their previous excitement about this target has begun to waiver. I have learned that twelve weeks is too long of a goal for my students because they aren't seeing that immediate feedback that Marzano talked about. The effectiveness that I had in the beginning is no longer there. I now have to find another way to motivate my students or get them back to owning this goal, to remind them that this is their goal that they set. As I think ahead to next year, I will certainly use this type of activity again but I will not have my students set such a long time frame; instead of 12 weeks, I will encourage my students to set a 6 week goal. I believe this will be much more manageable and be much more effective. Siegle also talked about setting smaller goals. "When it comes to goal setting, smaller is better. Help your students set small, achievable goals that can be accomplished quickly." (Students Set Goals, Siegle, 2000) This goal setting activity certainly proved his point, smaller can be better.

I recently read a quote from Michael Jordan that connected to this Module and Indicator 2 in particular. This quote made me realize the importance of setting goals and the impact goal setting can have on me as the teacher, on my classroom's learning environment, and my students. "I approach everything step by step....I had always set short term goals. As I look back, each one of these steps or successes led to the next one....As I reached those goals, they built on one another. I gained a little confidence every time I came through." (Pursuit of Excellence, Michael Jordan) By focusing on setting goals it did lead to my student's successes and built up their confidence. It also led to my success to create a positive learning environment, helped create students who ask questions about their learning, and who set personal and academic goals.

Over the past two months, I have seen the success my students have had in setting Math goals, and now I want to turn my attention to Reading. I want to work with them to create Reading goals that are meaningful for them. I have learned through this process, that they will have more success if they set goals themselves and that the goals they set are short term and attainable. In Siegle's article, he suggests having the students set three goals a week and they can use a form called "My Accomplishment Plan/What I Want to Do Better This Week." He also suggests reviewing these goals with your students and meeting with them at the end of the week to see how well they have accomplished their goals. I am planning on using these suggestions and implementing them in my classroom in the months ahead. I am excited to see how my students progress and grow, and how it affects their learning, as well as, mine.