

ASSIGNMENT 7: SCIENCE LEARNING COMMUNITY PROJECT

The Problem

One of the problems that I worked to fix during the course of the semester had to do a little with classroom management in that my students constantly get out of their seats and are walking around the room during instruction time and independent work time. When we are on the carpet and I am reading aloud many students will just stand up in the middle of the carpet and get up to get tissues or to throw something away. There have been many times when I ask them to sit down and then they explain why they are up and I explain that they need to wait until instruction is over because they are causing a distraction, however many of them continue the behavior. Also, when they are at their seats completing a task whether it is writing, reading quietly, or working on math, they still find a reason to get out of their seats and walk around the room. This has been a major distraction to the learning community in that the students who are getting up are talking to other students while they are on their way to the tissue box or pencil bin, or they are swinging on the desks, or walking loudly and making sounds on their way. This interferes with effective science learning, because it is distracting and worries me that they will not follow simple directions when we have experiments or science activities that require multi-step directions. Also, it is unsafe for them to get out of their seats when they want during a science activity if we are working with certain objects or materials. When the students get out of their seats my mentor and I ask the students to sit down quietly, we remind students of the safe way to move around the room (i.e. not swinging on desks), and explain the importance of being respectful to the students in the room during our learning time.

The norms of our classroom are that the students are to sit respectfully and quietly while the teacher is teaching, and are to raise their hands to participate. The students know that they are not to get out of their seats or from the carpet unless it is an emergency (they are hurt, about to have an accident, or about to be sick.) During independent work time the students are to work on their task and are told whether it is a quiet working time or a time when they can work with partners. If the students choose not to follow the rules of the classroom or the school their name gets moved down on our color system (green, yellow, red, and blue.) When students get to red they have a time out, and when they get moved to blue they have a time out outside of the room and are written up to the principal. We have not been moving students down the color system if they get out of their seats, they usually get several verbal warnings instead.

I believe the root cause of their excessive movement around the room during inappropriate times is due to a lack of attention span or boredom. We do have such a routine and it is so predictable that maybe they are bored with the material and the way we do it. Also, another cause might be the fact that they do have a lot of energy and that they only get about ten minutes a day of recess and even that does not always happen.

Planned Intervention Strategies

Some strategies that I plan to enact in the classroom to address the problem of students get out of their seats without asking are to implement some structured exercises or stretches, have consequences for them getting out of their seats after given a couple of verbal warnings, and reward students with a ROAR ticket for consistently following directions when it seems many of the students are getting up and out of their seats at inappropriate times. I will implement some of the structured exercises or stretches after they have been sitting for long periods of time. This will allow the students to release some of their energy that they have bottled up and hopefully prevent them from trying to move around the room during inappropriate times. I will make sure to make it like a "Simon Says" type of game in order to make it fun for the students yet make it structured at the same time. It will not take a long time, only about two minutes. My Field Instructor has given me this suggestion when she has visited my class and has observed how fidgety they are and how much they move around.

When it comes to implementing the rewards and consequences my CT has offered me the suggestion of moving their names after they have been given two verbal warnings. She has explained that once they get their name moved for that reason that maybe it would hinder them from doing it again, especially if it is a student who does not usually get their name moved. In my previous experience, when students who do not usually get

in trouble do something and get their stick moved, it really upsets them and they usually make sure not to get their name moved again. Also, with the rewards of offering the students a ROAR ticket or other reward that we are working with, such as money during our social studies unit. When I notice that students are getting out of their seats during inappropriate times I will be sure to point out and reward the students that are doing the right thing at the right time. In the past I have noticed that if I want the students' attention all I have to do is thank the students who are doing what they are supposed to be doing and then they all turn to see what is going on and then they follow. I am hoping that this same thing type of thinking will occur when it comes to them moving and getting out of their seats. Also, students do respond when they are rewarded or see that others are being rewarded. The ROAR tickets are used school-wide when students are following school rules, and since we have started social studies and the students are earning money for the class store, I have used money to give to students who are making good choices.

Results

The learning community changed over the course of the semester in that the students were not moving around the room as much like they had before. This has created a better learning community in which there are fewer distractions, because there are fewer people out of their seats and talking to others or making noises. Also, it has created a better science learning community, especially since we have the butterflies in the room. With the butterflies in the room I explained to the students that if they were moving around the room when they weren't supposed to be then they would scare the butterflies. I explained to the students that since we have the guests (butterflies) in the room it was important that they really follow directions that their teachers give them, because if they didn't that they could possibly hurt the butterflies. This really helped with my interventions and to get them to follow the classroom rules.

Even though the butterflies helped with changing the classroom environment, also having the students do some quick stretches and exercises really helped as well. The students really did like playing "Simon Says" and it helped break up our transition times nicely. The only thing with doing the stretches is that it was easy to forget about, especially when there was a change in the schedule, or when an activity took longer than anticipated. There were some days when we couldn't do any of the stretching and the students reminded me of it throughout the day. Also, the first few times I tried to implement the stretching the students were trying to talk over me and were being noisy. When they started to do this, I would have them go to their seats if they were not following the directions and they were not allowed to participate in the stretching. Also, the praising went over very well and the students responded to it. When students were given consequences for getting out of their seats they were not happy about it, but I explained that it was choice that they made and that they were given verbal warnings and continued with the behavior. Once the students noticed that there were consequences attached to the misbehavior, many of them would raise their hand if they needed to get up to get something or throw something away.

Implications of Learning Community Project

Based on my experiences and ideas from the community plan and the interventions that I implemented, I think overall it was a success. It was wonderful to see the change in the classroom and to see the students really respond to the interventions. At first I was worried that they wouldn't respond or that it wouldn't make a difference, but the interventions worked the majority of the time. I think I had the results I did because I was consistent with my interventions. I did not let students get away with it and I kept my word to them. If I told them I was going to move their name the next time they got out of their seats without raising their hands, then I would make sure that I would follow through. Also, with the stretching I tried my very best to fit into our schedule and any transition time. I noticed that it worked great as a transition and was most effective during that time. My strengths were that I was consistent and followed through with the students; my weakness was that I sometimes ran out of time to do the stretching and it was one of the interventions that was the most effective. When I didn't do the stretching the students had a lot of energy that they needed to release and wanted to get out of their seats more often. When I have my own classroom in the future I will definitely take from this project the ideas of how important it is to know what works for your students.