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**ENGAGING STUDENTS IN CULTURALLY RELEVANT MORNING
MEETINGS**

By

Melissa A. Vandine

A Thesis

Submitted to the
Department of Language, Literacy, and Sociocultural Education
College of Education
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree of
Master of Arts in Reading Education
at
Rowan University
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Thesis Advisor: Valerie Lee, Ph.D.

Dedications

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my children, Dustin and Noelle. My babies, while you may not remember the countless hours mommy worked behind her computer, your constant pleads for playtime, bedtime stories, and snuggles kept me in touch with reality. You gave me the strength to work harder, because working harder meant more time with you. This is for you my babies. I love you.

I would also like to dedicate this thesis to my husband, Dustin. My love, thank you for stepping up in times when I needed you. Taking over two roles is not an easy task, especially with two little ones. I would not have made it with out your support and commitment to our family. Thank you for being there for me. I love you.

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I would also like to acknowledge the wonderful ladies that I met in this reading program. Throughout this journey we have relied on each other for support and encouragement. Your friendships will not be forgotten. I look forward to learning about all of the amazing things you will all do and become.

Finally, this research would not have been possible without the students in Room 1. Boys and girls, I owe you the upmost gratitude as you helped to make this a reality for me. Thank you for being the unique children you are. You helped me to grow as a teacher and person through this wonderful experience.

Abstract

Melissa A. Vandine

ENGAGING STUDENTS IN CULTURALLY RELEVANT MORNING MEETING
2019-2020

Valerie Lee, Ph.D.

Master of Arts in Reading Education

The purpose of this study was to understand what happens to student participation when the student's Funds of Knowledge are used in Morning Meeting. Prior to this research, Morning Meeting was not inclusive of all of its participants and left the researcher wondering what components were missing to the current Morning Meeting framework. What motivates and engages students to participate in Morning Meeting guided the research study. Qualitative research was utilized in the study, which focused on student talk within Morning Meeting. A teacher's research journal, audio recordings, surveys, student interviews, and student journal responses were used to collect and analyze data from the Morning Meeting session. The data that was collected was analyzed through the use of triangulation and coding of student participation patterns and talk in order to determine themes that emerged from the study. Based on data analysis the use of culturally relevant and responses as well as providing student choice, helped to motivate and engage students as well as build positive relationships among the students in the classroom. Utilizing students Funds of Knowledge demonstrated positive effects on overall student engagement and motivation. As teachers of diverse classrooms, utilizing this practice is crucial to student success.

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Chapter I

Foundations of the Study

If kids come to us from strong, healthy functioning families, it makes our job easier. If they do not come to us from strong, healthy, functioning families, it makes our job more important. (Barbra Coloroso)

“CPI... CPI...” called the overhead announcement. 1...now 2...now 5 teachers begin making their way in a hustling manner to Mrs. Wapner’s classroom. John screams as he grabs the scissors from the community supply table. “Get the students out!” yelled Mrs. Mary as she attempts to take the scissors away from John. Students wait, on edge, in the hall as John is being taken out of the room kicking and screaming as Mrs. Mary and Mrs. Smith attempt to restrain him. “Ok students let’s get back to work,” Mrs. Wapner said. Students file back in the classroom questions and concerns paint their face.

In Ms. Van’s classroom, Sarah has her head down, eyes barely open. “Why are you so tired?” Ms. Van asks, “Didn’t you get sleep? What time do you go to bed? Don’t your parents watch when you go to bed?” Sarah doesn’t have time to speak. Ms. Van whispers just enough for her to hear, “I don’t have time for this.”

Miguel, in Mrs. Rohe’s room down the hall, can barely speak English. He just moved here from Puerto Rico because his home was damaged in Hurricane Maria and is staying with family until they can get back on their feet. He doesn’t participate in class and it seems to annoy Mrs. Rohe. “Do you know what we are talking about Miguel? I am calling on you because you aren’t raising your hand.” As she waits for an answer Miguel’s eyes wander around the room looking for an answer to make her happy, “Seven,” he says. Mrs. Rohe responds “See? I told you. You weren’t listening.”

“Late again Logan,” Ms. Charlie says as she signs the “late book.” Logan rolls his eyes, grabs his pass, and heads to Ms. Staci’s classroom. When he arrives, he notices the students have already begun their math lesson. As he walks in, eyes immediately fall on him. Ms. Charlie explains to the students to work quietly while she catches Logan up on the work that he missed.

Later on, in the school’s monthly staff meeting, the words “Morning Meeting” were projected on the screen. Teacher’s were asked to pick a color that represented how they were feeling; red for angry, blue for sad, purple for worried/anxious, and yellow for happy/content. Mrs. Mary came in and said, “Staff, I know this school year has been rough, but I think the climate committee and I have found a solution.”

Story of the Question

I began my teaching career as a third grade teacher in the same district and school that I grew up in. Without a doubt this is where I envisioned myself working. As a student, the teachers and my classmates made it such a positive learning experience for me. Flash forward to the present, and while some things have changed, I remember walking into my very own classroom feeling as if I would be like all of the other “Erin Gruwell’s” out there and make a difference in my future students. Even after all of my schooling and teacher preparation classes, nothing would of or could have prepared me for what I was about to experience.

Over the past four years, our school has experienced attendance concerns, low morale among teaching staff and students, low test scores all cupped with episodes of violent behavior from our students. I was asked to join the CPI team. This team is trained to restrain kids who may be of danger to others or themselves. I, along with about ten

other teachers, joined the team. Throughout the remainder of the year, “CPI” was called over the loudspeaker often. Teachers would leave their lunches, recess duty, or copy making just to find themselves in a heated situation with an 8 to 10 year old , wondering what happened to begin with. I eventually made the decision to not be a part of the team anymore. As a CPI member, I always felt on the edge of my seat and it left the morale of many, low.

This type of behavior among students continued. In addition we found ourselves battling absenteeism. Some students were missing up to three months of school and teachers were left with trying to figure out how they could catch them up. Our school continued to suffer with low-test scores and many teachers felt that it was their fault. The whole school was stuck in this “funk” that we didn’t know how to get out of. Our principal decided to create a climate committee to see if they could come up with some positive strategies to support the challenges we were facing. As a team, they decided the school would give “Morning Meetings” a try to support the social and emotional well being of our students.

Our principal and climate committee gave us professional development and a plethora of resources to use the year prior to implementation. Teachers were asked if anyone wanted to pilot morning meetings and report back to support changes if need be. I decided I would give it a try. What did I have to lose? I followed the guidelines outlined in the template and used the suggestions for Morning Meeting discussions. Participation in the “share” and “activity,” two of the components of the Morning Meeting framework, varied and were inconsistent. The same three to four students participated and many just sat there and went through the motions of listening to the daily talk of others. This made

me wonder, while the intent was good, if we as a school were approaching Morning Meeting the right way.

After analyzing the makeup of my classroom, I began to notice patterns of participation. One thing was clear that many of my Spanish-speaking students were not the ones participating in class discussion. In addition my one African American student, who was recently suspended for a week, also did not seem to contribute to class conversation. The students who did participate came from backgrounds of families whose parents were married and of those families who seemed to have the funds for participating in many different activities such as sports and family outings. No wonder a majority of my students did not participate. Nothing we discussed was relevant to them. How could I be so blatantly ignorant to the others in the classroom? How could I encourage my students of varying backgrounds to participate and feel as if they belong with our Morning Meetings? Would incorporating their cultural backgrounds or Funds of Knowledge, support an overall engagement in Morning Meetings? Thus the adventure of creating a more culturally relevant Morning Meeting experience began.

Purpose Statement

As I described in the vignette, at the beginning of this chapter, last school year our principal proposed a new initiative in our school, the Morning Meeting Framework, to help with overall student behavior in terms of social and emotional learning. This idea came about due to the need to improve relationships in the school. The intent of the Morning Meeting framework was to help students feel more comfortable in the classroom by speaking about topics that are important to them, whether it be personal or school

related. In turn, this open discussion of sharing thoughts and ideas, would hopefully build positive relationships among students and staff in the building.

I piloted Morning Meeting last year and followed the format and guidelines my principal gave me, thinking that this new addition of student talk into the school day would help to support student engagement and motivation. What I found, however, was that the same students each day participated, and I got an overall sense that the students were not interested in the topics we were discussing. I felt frustrated because this new framework that we were supposed to implement was supposed to help build relationships and promote student engagement. I felt as if this was yet again something else were asked to do that had no purpose and was meant just to look “pretty.” Claims of Morning Meeting successes made me wonder if it was all a hoax or did students really buy into this framework?

I continued to look through the materials my principal gave me and I was doing exactly what the book wanted me to do. I followed scripts, I picked out activities from a book of suggestions; I was doing exactly what everyone else in the school was doing. I started to wonder though, if that was my problem. Did a neatly packaged program have all the bells and whistles it claimed or was there something missing? Was going against the book and doing something different such a bad thing? My “ah ha” moment was when I was learning about sociocultural theorists. As I was learning about each of these theorists, their viewpoints and beliefs about education, I noticed a common theme among all of them and that was that they did not live by a book of suggestions. Socio-cultural theory focuses on cultural aspects of learning, which includes language and social interactions (Tracey and Morrow, 2006). A common theme that I noticed about

sociocultural theorists is that they use student's cultural skills and social structures to help support learning in the classroom. Teachers may incorporate cultural participation structures, multicultural texts, learning styles, and student's home language into their classroom instruction, which may look very different from the traditional educational belief. Their beliefs about the way education should be, some would argue, have broken traditional beliefs in the education system. I was conducting Morning Meeting the traditional way, the way some believe it is supposed to be run. Thinking back on it, I realize that in order to reach my students I needed to do something that these theorists have done to support student achievement. After learning about Sociocultural theory and how important it is to consider students' cultural backgrounds to help engage and motivate them, I felt as if this was the missing piece to our current Morning Meeting framework. There are many theoretical perspectives that support building positive relationships among students and staff through culturally responsive practices. While yes, there is a plethora of literature that discusses the importance of culturally relevant and responsive practices; the key component that was missing was my students. This information can't be found in a book or a neatly packaged program. I needed to dig deeper to uncover and understand my students in a way that was going to prove that Morning Meeting could in fact be successful.

A key component to building positive relationships is communication. Gay (2018) explains that communication and culture go hand in hand and that one cannot be without the other. According to Gay, learning is most effective when culturally relevant practices, such as communication styles, are incorporated into the classroom. Although communication is typically seen as a means of transferring information from one person

to another, communication has many other capabilities. Lankoff (2004) asserts that communication is about “ creating relationships, cohesion, and community among different people” (p. 93). As part of this research, I hope to understand what methods of communicating are best in order to build those relationships and create a sense of community in my classroom.

How is communication supported through culturally relevant practices?

Sociocultural theorists would agree that people of varying backgrounds have their own communication styles and structures that they bring with them from their cultures. The typical, mainstream, way of communicating information through the classroom is students raising their hands to be called on. Delpit (1988) would describe this type of mainstream way as a sign of a culture of power. The culture of power she is referring to would be that there are codes or rules for participating that creates a “culture of power” in the classroom, such as rules and styles of communication (p. 283). This turn taking may be comfortable for some cultures, but not all. When conducting research in Hawaii on classroom participation, Au (1980) identified nine structures for participation. When conducting research into students’ participatory structures, it will be important to determine what structures students are comfortable with to help eliminate the culture of power in the classroom.

While communication is key to positive relationships, how to get people to take part in discussion has been discussed and researched for many years. Moll et. al (1992) describes *Funds of Knowledge* as knowledge that is a part of an individual’s being. This knowledge is obtained through a person’s life experiences (Moll, 1992; Mjoe et. al, 2004). As noted above communication looks different in each culture. Moll et. al (1992)

explains that it is rare that teachers use a student's Funds of Knowledge in the context of the classroom, which is important to the individual needs of the student. Using the Funds of Knowledge of students may help to promote conversations in the classroom to support student participation

My research will focus on Morning Meetings, but more specifically how to engage students within the Morning Meeting framework.

According to Horche et. al (2002),

this daily ritual builds a sense of community while setting a positive tone for the day. Its four components—greeting, sharing, a group game or activity, and a daily letter and news from the teacher—provide an opportunity for children to learn and practice a variety of social and academic skills, including speaking in front of others about meaningful experiences, listening to peers and responding appropriately with questions and comments, working cooperatively, and using knowledge recently learned in class

(p. 367-368).

While Morning Meetings can be used for a variety of purposes, engaging students in conversation and encouraging student involvement is what this research will look into further.

The Morning Meeting framework is supportive of the “Responsive Classroom Approach.” According to this approach there are six components of a responsive classroom. The components include Morning Meeting, rules and logical consequences, guided discovery, classroom organization, academic choice, and assessment and

reporting to parents. Collectively the components help to develop academic, social and emotional skills.

Statement of Research Problem and Question

Schools today are rich with culturally diverse students. With that being said, educators will have to take on the role Paulo Friere would describe as “teacher learner” (p.16). Friere (1985) explains that “teachers should be conscious everyday that they are coming to school to learn and not just teach” (p. 16). Educators need to be able to understand their students more than meets the eye. Using students’ cultural backgrounds can support positive learning experiences in the classroom. This is important when challenged with the task of motivating and engaging our students in and out of the classroom. Thus, the research question I plan to investigate is as follows: What happens to student participation when the students’ Funds of Knowledge are incorporated into Morning Meetings in a fourth grade classroom?

Organization of the Thesis

The following chapters outline the organization of the thesis. Chapter II focuses on the literature supporting culturally relevant and responsive classrooms. The topics that are discussed in the chapter include, Culturally Relevant and Responsive approaches and practices, Participation Structures, Classroom Management, Social and Emotional Learning, Morning Meeting and Engagement. Chapter III discusses the context of this study, qualitative research, data collection methods, and sources of data. Chapter IV explains the data that was collected during the study as well as major findings. Chapter V concludes with a summary of the findings, conclusions drawn from the study and recommendations for future research.

Chapter II

Review of the Literature

A bridge is a good metaphor for teachers' work as sociocultural mediators. A bridge helps connect two areas that otherwise might be hard to reach. A bridge also introduces us to new terrains and new adventures. In addition, a bridge makes going back and forth easy. Rather than the expectation that students need to "burn their bridges- that is, forget and reject their native language and ethnic culture- they can instead become bilingual and bicultural. When teachers act as bridges, they send a message to their students that their identities are worthwhile. This is a valuable disposition for all teachers to have.

(Nieto, 2017, p. 131).

Student engagement is a topic of interest among many educators with a variety of research highlighting the positive effects for students. Chapter II presents literature in the areas that are supportive of student engagement in the classroom. Section one explains the definition of the terms culturally relevant and responsive classrooms. Funds of Knowledge theory is presented in this section as well and how they can be used to build a culturally relevant and responsive classroom. Culturally relevant participation structures as well as classroom management strategies are discussed. In addition the term culturally relevant pedagogy is discussed. The next section focuses on the term social and emotional learning as well as a discussion about Morning Meeting. In the final section, current student engagement practices are discussed.

Culturally Relevant and Responsive Classrooms

Culturally relevant and culturally responsive are terms many theorists use to describe instructional practices that use a student's cultural background to support learning. Geneva Gay, a theorist who supports a culturally responsive classroom, explains that “culturally responsive teaching can be defined as using the cultural knowledge prior experiences frames of reference and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning counters more relevant and effective for them” (2018, p. 36). While true for ethnically diverse populations of students, culturally responsive teaching and practices are just as effective for all students. Gloria Ladson Billings (1992) is supportive of Gay’s definition of culturally relevance and describes, in her words, that to be culturally relevant means to not just mesh school and student culture, but to use the students culture in order to “help self understanding and the understanding of others, to support social structures, and to conceptualize knowledge” (p. 314). Like Gay and Ladson Billings, Au (2005) explains that students should view their cultural backgrounds as an asset to support academic learning, which can be built upon throughout the school year.

How can teachers support this theory? What does a culturally relevant responsive classroom look like? In order to obtain information to be utilized in the classroom Gonzalez et. al (2005) explain that this information can be obtained through learning about a student’s Funds of Knowledge. Funds of Knowledge is knowledge about a student’s cultural background though analyzing the homes in which these students come from. Neff and Amanti (1991), conducted their study in the homes of students to learn about their Funds of Knowledge in order to understand the students they teach. While

exploring the homes of their Mexican students, Amanti learned that many of them were interested in economics, and one student in particular was interested in entrepreneurship for candy selling. With this knowledge, the researchers decided they were going to use this knowledge to support a production unit within their classrooms. After conducting the lesson, the teachers and researchers learned that infusing both home life and school could have positive effects on student, teacher, and community relationships . In addition, the researchers found that using this knowledge can support curricular goals through the use of student research teams by using topics that are of interest and meaningful to them. Billings (1995) explains that “culturally relevant pedagogy must provide a way for students to maintain their cultural integrity while succeeding academically” (p. 476). Like the previous example, another teacher, also used students cultural background in order to promote culturally relevant pedagogy. A student that the teacher noticed was often suspended for his behavior. Instead of suppressing the student’s behaviors, she used it to help him use his leadership abilities in order to run for school president, in which he was elected by his classmates (Ladson Billings, 1995). In another example, Ullucci (2011) observed classrooms of white teachers in order to understand how they promote cultural relevance in their classrooms. The components she focused on included curriculum and teaching strategies. In one classroom, the students had the opportunity to bring in special artifacts from their heritage that they could share with the class. Ullucci noted that the students engaged in question asking of the students who shared artifacts, and that this question asking of each other was a common practice in this classroom. In other observations, she observed many of the teachers were using culturally appropriate texts to support the curriculum. Ullucci reiterated that the teachers utilized students home culture

in order to support a culturally relevant classroom with making it a “special event” (p. 396). In terms of teaching strategies, Ullucci explained that she observed what she called a workshop model, in which time, space and multiplicity of task was student driven. This was different from the typical “factory model” of students completing the same task at the same time (p. 398). After conducting her research, Ullucci found teachers utilizing a variety of different methods and strategies to support a culturally relevant and responsive classroom. Ullucci explains culturally responsive or relevant practices can’t be done once, but rather teachers who support this ideology should do so “consistently, holistically, and with a critical eye” (p. 402).

Participation structures. Moll et. al (1992) describes *Funds of Knowledge* as knowledge that is part of an individual’s being. Moll (1992) and Mjoe et. al (2004) agree that this knowledge is obtained through a person’s life experiences, and communication looks different in each culture. Moll et. al (1992) explains that it is rare that teachers use a student’s Funds of Knowledge in the context of the classroom, which is important to the individual needs of the student. Using the Funds of Knowledge of students may help to promote conversations in the classroom to support student participation.

Over the years, structures of participation have been researched to help support a culturally relevant classroom. Gay (2018) explains that “communication cannot exist without culture, culture cannot be known without communication, and teaching and learning are more effective for ethnically diverse students when classroom communication is culturally responsive” (p. 89). In order to support student engagement and motivation to participate, participation structures and the ways students communicate with one another have been evaluated to determine the effectiveness of them. Gay (2018)

believes that “too many teachers operate on the same assumption that there is only one acceptable way of communicating across all circumstances audiences and contexts” (p. 91) Typically there are very limited forms of participation in classrooms. Often times it is the teacher asking the questions, while allowing one “correct answer.” When structures are limited so too are the students we expect to participate. Au and Kawakami (1985) studied participation structures in the Kamehameha Early Education Program in Honolulu Hawaii. In their study they found that the structure of participation that yielded better student participation was a structure she termed “Talk Story.” The authors explained that “the chief characteristic of talk story is a joint performance or the cooperative production of responses by two or more speakers” which can be found in Hawaiian communities (p. 409). Using a talk story participation structure students are allowed to interject each other with ideas and questions in order to promote the group's understanding of a particular topic, which is different from traditional structures of participation where the teacher questions and one student answers.

Santori (2011) studied structures of participation including guided reading, shared reading and shared evaluation pedagogy (SHEP). Based on her findings, she found that “students had significant control over the discussion and their interpretation of the text; they were able to exercise greater textual agency” (p. 204). Students also seemed more engaged and asked better questions when given the opportunity to participate in a more dialogic conversation.

Osorio (2018) focused on participation of students in discussions as well as the socio-cultural context of multicultural literature. To do this, Osorio used multicultural literature “to promote an appreciation for diversity, to honor student’s voices, to connect

to student's linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and to promote critical consciousness" (p. 24). Many of the discussions focused on multicultural and mirror text that were relevant to the student's lives. Osorio admitted that the realities of her students as well as their Funds of Knowledge could "no longer be ignored, but instead needed to become an integral part of the classroom curriculum" (p. 50). After conducting the study in her own classroom, Osorio found that her students not only became learners, but teachers as well providing personal narratives and connections to support the texts they were reading.

Classroom management. Finding the perfect classroom management strategy is something that teachers strive to obtain to help their classrooms run more smoothly. There are a variety of strategies that teachers use in the classroom that would be considered "classroom management." These strategies include class/school wide incentives, behavior charts, reward systems, and class rules and procedures to name a few. The goal, in regard to classroom management, is to provide a safe and welcoming environment for students. Many theorists believe that in order to be successful with classroom management, educators should employ culturally responsive techniques. Bondy et. al, (2007) argues that culturally responsive classroom management is different from general classroom management and requires different knowledge, dispositions, and skills. In order to develop a culturally responsive plan for management, it is essential that the educator become familiar with the backgrounds and cultural upbringings of his or her students to ensure a successful plan. In a study conducted by Bondy et. al, novice teachers were observed in an urban classroom setting. They took video and conducted teacher interviews to gain insight into the first days of school and how classroom management was developed. The findings suggest that building student

and teacher relationships, establishing expectations and holding students accountable, and communication were essential factors that promoted positive classroom management. Something that was noted in the study was that the teachers allowed students to conduct getting-to-know-you activities that not only allowed them to learn about their peers, but to also learn about their teacher as well. Bondy explained “the teachers agreed that the classroom was a happier and more productive place when teacher and students knew each other and treated each other respectfully” (p. 337). In addition something else the teachers felt was necessary was to establish class expectations. The teachers in this research took on a variety of approaches such as student examples, student suggestions and texts to support behaviors of the classroom. Holding students accountable was another important factor to successful classroom management. Bondy et al explained that the teachers did not allow “students [to] continue behavior that failed to meet the teachers’ expectations for them. Teachers used two main strategies to ‘insist’ that students meet expectations and in doing so they always preserved the respectful and caring connection to each student” (p. 341).

What is Social and Emotional Learning?

According to Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL, 2019), Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) is the process in which children and adults manage emotions, set goals, make responsible decisions, show empathy for others and develop positive relationships with others . Many schools make Social and Emotional Learning a part of the districts curriculum for a variety of reasons. Much of the reason for implementation of Social and Emotional Learning programs is due to poor school climate. Through SEL activities, students and teachers work together to

implement “opportunities for students to understand their own emotions, empathize with diverse perspectives, cultivate trusting relationships, solve problems constructively, and make decisions while considering the needs of others” (“Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning,” 2019). A successful SEL curriculum and program suggests social and academic achievement among students. Smith and Low (2013) argue that the use of SEL opportunities can help students develop Social Competence. Skills taught in a social and emotional learning program are often comparable to one another and can be developed in conjunction with one another. They believe empathy, emotion management, and problem solving skills help students to develop healthy relationships with others in order to make friends. In addition to these skills, “communication skills, friendship skills and assertiveness also all fall under the broad category of social competence” (p. 282-283). In order to support these skills, there are a variety of activities teachers can implement in their classrooms. Some of these activities include role-playing, story telling, team building and class discussions. Smith and Low believe “teachers can empower their students to create a healthier school climate by starting with a strong skills-focused SEL program and reinforcing student skill use throughout the school day” (2013, p. 285).

Morning Meeting. One way to support Social and Emotional Learning in schools is through Morning Meetings. According to the Responsive Classroom website, the goal of Morning Meeting is to help students build social and academic skills through the components outlined in the framework which include Greeting, Sharing, Group Activity, and Reflection (Morning Message). When analyzing the components of the Morning Meeting framework, each component is crucial to the full success of the meeting. The

first component of Morning Meeting is the Greeting. Bondy and Ketts (2001) explain the purpose of the Greeting is to help students build relationships through verbal and non-verbal communication to “help students gain a sense of belonging” within the classroom (p. 144). Greeting can take on a variety of approaches such as using hand gestures and different languages in order to say hello. When people greet each other, and in this case when students take part in community greeting, it builds a sense of belonging and recognition.

The next component is called Sharing. In this component students have discussions about topics chosen by the teacher or student and is usually followed up with additional questions or comments related to the topic. This should not be confused however with a typical “show and tell session,” and students are encouraged to participate in face to face conversations in order to support and develop social skills (Bondy & Ketts, 2001, p. 145). Sharing supports Social and Emotional competencies such as self-awareness, decision-making, relationship skills, self-management, and social awareness. When students are able to share their most important thoughts and stories, followed by students comments and questions says to the person sharing ‘I paid attention to you; I care about how you feel’ (Kriete and Davis, 2016). The authors explained a situation in which a student named Graham shared that he went to visit with his mom over the weekend because his parents were divorced. Students were able to ask him questions that not only showed that they were interested in what he had to say, but also demonstrated empathy. For example one of the questions a student asked was “ Do you miss your mom a lot when she leaves?” and another student commented “ I met his mom.

She is nice.” This again emphasized to Graham that we care about you, which made him smile (Kriete and Davis, 2016, p. 92).

The third component of Morning Meeting is the Activity. Students complete an activity, typically in a group setting. Activities focus on specific social or academic skills. Bondy and Ketts also explain that group activities promote problem solving and conflict resolution by placing students in various situations. While Morning Meeting activities can take on many different approaches, activities that support Social and Emotional competencies often include activities where students take part in role playing and building friendship skills to name a few. Smith and Low (2013) examined the role of Social and Emotional Learning and how it can be supportive of bullying prevention. They explained that when students have the opportunity to learn problem-solving skills, conflicts are deescalated 13 times more. In turn, students are better able to handle their emotions and build healthier relationships with their peers.

The final component is the Reflection or “Morning Message.” The Responsive Classroom website describes the Morning Message or Reflection as a short message that helps students to focus on what they will be doing that day. While Bondy and Ketts do not include the Morning Message as part of their Morning Meeting framework, prior to moving on with the rest of their day, they do include news and announcements. Like the other component of Morning Meeting, the Morning Message can also take on many shapes and forms. Kriete and Davis (2006) explain that the purpose of Morning Message is to build community through shared written information, develop and reinforce skills being taught in the classroom and makes for an easy transition to the rest of the day while building excitement among students about the day’s events.

Student Engagement

Studies on engaging students in the classroom continue to be a topic of interest among many researchers and educators. Because the term engagement is such a broad topic, its definition is very much contingent upon the person who is analyzing the engagement. For example Taylor and Parsons (2011) explain that engagement can fall under categories such as “academic, cognitive, intellectual, institutional, emotional, behavioral, social, and psychological” (p. 4). When planning lessons or activities, teachers need to be aware of the type of student engagement they would like addressed.

Taylor and Parsons believe that interaction is supportive engagement. “Respectful relationships and interaction including both virtual and personal are shown to improve student engagement” (p. 8). One of the major components of Social and Emotional learning is building relationships with peers. Williams, Friesen and Milton (2009) focus much of their research on the idea of students building stronger relationships with teachers, each other, and their community. In addition they found that many students wanted their teachers to know how they learn as well as wanted teachers to build learning environments that supports relationships and a culture of learning. Locasale-Crouch et. al (2018) also found similar results in students’ engagement based on teacher and student relationships. In this study, she observed a classroom that had a “positive classroom climate” as well as those labeled “chaos classrooms” (p. 4). The social and emotional makeup of the positive classroom had students feeling safe and respected among the students and teacher and those in the chaos classroom experienced aggressions and disruptions. Based on the results of the study “higher teacher–student interaction quality [positive classroom climate] was associated with higher reading, math, closeness,

engagement, and positive feelings about school and with lower conflict” (Locasale-Crouch et. al, 2018, 6).

In addition, Taylor and Parsons (2011) believe “relevancy” is also supportive of engagement. “Today’s learners ask that their learning apply to real-life scenarios whenever possible as opposed to being theoretical and text-based” (p. 12). Culturally relevant theorists such as Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995), would support this stance by including the cultural component as a means of reaching student engagement, stating that culturally relevant teachers utilize students cultural backgrounds as a vehicle for learning. This suggests that when teachers use a student’s cultural background to support learning in the classroom, the student is more likely to be engaged. Within “relevancy” Taylor and Parsons also believe that the use of multimedia and technology helps to support student engagement as well. Considering that more students now than ever have grown up being exposed to multiple technologies, teaching without it is not an option. Taylor and Parsons (2011) explain that “technology brings learners accessible and relevant subject matter and experts and is a tool for engaged learning” (p. 14).

Conclusion

The literature that was presented suggests that the creation of a culturally relevant and responsive classroom can have positive effects in terms of academic and social behaviors. A social and emotional learning framework that is utilized is Morning Meeting. Research has shown the benefits of utilizing a Morning Meeting framework, however how to use culturally relevant and responsive practices within the Morning Meeting framework would benefit from further research.

The next chapter will focus on how the study was organized. Information about the district, school, and participants will be presented. In addition, an explanation of the procedure of the study as well as data sources and analysis will be highlighted.

Chapter III

Research Setting and Design

The teacher cannot be the only expert in the classroom. To deny students their own expert knowledge is to disempower them. (Lisa Delpit)

Research Paradigm

The research methodology for this study is qualitative research, in which I am seeking to understand student participation through conversations within Morning Meetings naturally occurring in the classroom. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), qualitative research in education is defined as research that focuses on individual interactions in a social setting. Qualitative research is a common practice used among researchers in the educational field. In qualitative research, the researcher strives to build positive relationships as a means to use data from participants in order to understand the phenomenon better. Qualitative research is best suited for this study because it allows the teacher to be able to have personal insight into the classroom as it is naturally occurring. Lytle and Cochran-Smith (1992) explain that through teacher inquiry, teachers and their students actively “negotiate what is considered knowledge in the classroom, who has the ability to have knowledge and how knowledge is generated, challenged and evaluated” (p. 452). It is through teacher inquiry within their own classrooms that they get to know and understand how knowledge is constructed as well as how interpretations of classroom events are shaped (Lytle & Cochran-Smith, 1992). Qualitative research is crucial to educational studies because it allows the teacher to interact with the students and be a part of the research process.

The methodology that will be used for the research is dialectical in that the investigator and participants will be taking part in conversational dialogue of topics of interest to the students. Dialogue among the students and the teacher is essential in understanding what engages and motivates students to participate in Morning Meeting. Dialectical dialogue is encouraged, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985), so that “structural change is able to take place in order to reduce ignorance and misapprehensions” (p.110). Understanding how students communicate with one another as well as the structure of participation utilized in Morning Meeting is crucial in this particular study. Part of the study requires students to develop their own structure of participation including the rules and procedures for sharing. Lincoln and Guba (1985) explain that through dialectical dialogue the investigator and the subjects have the ability to see and make changes to existing structures.

Procedure of the Study

This study was conducted from October to December, approximately eight weeks. Data collection took place during the Morning Meeting sessions for approximately 15-20 minutes, which was the length of the Morning Meeting session. The following outlined the procedures of the study.

- Week 1: Obtained parental consent to use student data in the form of survey, audio recordings, observations, questionnaires, and journal responses. During week one, the initial study survey about Morning Meeting was given.
- Week 2: Began collecting data on Morning Meeting. Discussed rules and procedures for Morning Meeting and how students wanted to communicate with one another. Took notes on student conversations and how rules and procedures

evolved over the course of the week. Initiated getting to know you activities to support student discussions and activities for the “share” and “activity” portion of Morning Meeting.

- Week 3: Began implementing Morning Meeting “Greetings.” Modeled suggested greetings to help students become comfortable with one another. Observations and journal responses focused on how students communicate with one another through greetings.
- Week 4: Began implementation of students' Funds of Knowledge during the “share” session of Morning Meeting. The use of multicultural texts and topics was used to promote student discussion. Modeled and discussed ways for students to share information with one another. Conducted mid survey with students to gain insight into how student’s attitudes and feelings have changed about Morning Meeting. Used audio recordings, observation notes to document student talk and participation.
- Week 5: Began implementation of student’s backgrounds into the activity portion of Morning Meeting. Information from getting to know you activities and share sessions supported activities conducted during Morning Meeting. Discussed what it means to be a team player as well as the term teamwork. Discussed and modeled problem solving techniques for in and out of the classroom situations. Used audio recordings and observation notes to report on student interactions with one another.
- Week 6: Had students complete a journal response on Morning Meeting and their thoughts and feelings towards it. Week six focused on tweaking Morning

Meeting, making changes as needed that were noted through observation of student talk and interactions with one another. Continued to use student's backgrounds to support student "share" and "activity" sessions within Morning Meeting.

- Week 7: Conducted student questionnaire about Morning Meeting including what their favorite part of Morning Meeting was, why they like the part they chose and what could be changed about Morning Meeting to make it better. Continued to take notes and audio recordings of student talk and participation in discussions and activities.
- Week 8: Conducted post survey on student attitudes and feelings toward Morning Meeting. Continuation of Morning Meeting practices outlined in previous weeks.

Data Sources

In order to understand student engagement through Morning Meeting, a variety of sources of data were collected. One of the data sources included observation of student discussions captured in a researcher's journal. Prior to the start of the Morning Meeting, a "share" or topic was presented on the board. Topics were chosen based off of previous Morning Meetings and previous lessons, student choice, and beginning of the year student surveys. During the Morning Meeting, I would jot down notes as students conversed. The notes I took would include student responses to the topic discussed, how students participated and interacted with each other as well as signs of empathy towards one another. I also noted topics that seemed to be of interest based on student response and participation.

A second data source that I utilized was audio recordings. During the Morning Meeting period, I used audio recordings to allow myself to be a part of the Morning Meeting discussion. In addition, the use of the audio recordings helped to understand student-to-student interaction with one another. The ability to go back and analyze the Morning Meeting discussion was important when understanding student talk because it allowed me to listen to naturally occurring conversations students had with one another. Capturing their voice helped to not only to hear what they said, but to also understand the tone as they conversed with one another. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explain that observation of conversation among individuals has many benefits. Some of those benefits include being able to witness first hand events in order to record in the moment happenings, observation of incidents that could be used to support questions for interview purposes , and the ability to capture conversation naturally that an observer may not express in a formal interview.

A third data source that I used was student surveys. A survey was given in the beginning, middle, and end of the study. The students were asked the same questions in each survey. The surveys took about ten minutes to complete. Questions focused on Morning Meeting and the student's attitudes and feelings towards it, how they felt within Morning Meeting. The surveys were utilized to help me understand what aspects of Morning Meeting were not being covered and how students generally felt about what was discussed during that time period.

A fourth data source was student interviews. I pulled students one on one to participate in the interviews. During this time, I asked students questions pertaining to the Morning Meeting framework and current thoughts and feelings about Morning Meeting. I

also asked the students what they envisioned Morning Meeting to “be” and how I, as the facilitator of Morning Meeting, could make changes to make the meetings better. Student responses were recorded in a journal.

A fifth data source that was utilized was sociograms. During Morning Meeting sessions, I observed student discussions that took place. During the student discussions, I wanted to understand not only what topics were discussed, but to also understand how those topics supported participation and engagement during Morning Meeting. Looking for patterns amongst those who participated and those who did not and how often students participated and who did students chose in the sharing sessions helped me to understand patterns of participation structures and student talk.

A pre-, mid, and post-survey was conducted with the students. Questions included those about participating in class discussion and culturally relevant representation. Observations and notes took place during the Morning Meeting. Responses were assigned pseudonyms. The tools that were utilized to support this study included student pre, mid, and post survey questions, observation notes in the investigators journal, and a tally chart to see participation patterns among the students who will be participating in the study. Audio recordings were utilized during this study during the morning meeting period on Mondays. The purpose of utilizing Monday is so that I could use the information gathered to determine an action plan for future Morning Meeting discussions. Audio recordings were recorded on a school-approved device and were stored on a password-protected computer.

Data Analysis

In order to analyze the data collected from the study, the use of “triangulation” was utilized. According to Shagourney and Power (2012) “triangulation” is the use of multiple different sources, methods, investigators or theories to confirm findings” (p. 144). Data sources that were utilized included observation notes, audio recordings, and student survey/questionnaires to obtain information about student talk and participation. The data sources were utilized to analyze the narratives of the students in the study. Because the study was focused on conversations that took place in Morning Meeting, analyzing student narratives within the study was important when understanding student talk.

Understanding student participation patterns was one goal of this study. As students participated, they were given tally marks to help identify trends in participation. In addition to the tally charts, I also kept a researcher’s journal to take notes about possible reasons for student participation. The tally marks and notes helped to make adjustments to the Morning Meeting sessions each day.

Narrative analysis was also used in this study. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), narrative analysis focuses on first hand accounts in social settings. In this study, the sources of data that were analyzed included journal notes, surveys, and student interviews. During the Morning Meeting session, I took notes of student talk including what topics engaged students, student behaviors that demonstrated empathy and the evolution of the Morning Meeting structure. Audio recordings were also utilized in this study. The purpose of the audio recordings was to better understand how students communicate with each other as well as to understand what engages students and

motivates them to participate. Audio recordings were transcribed in order to identify patterns of participation as well.

One of the methods used was coding. Categories of common themes were created based on the information the sources gave. To identify common themes, I highlighted words and phrases that I noticed appeared often in student conversation, through anecdotal notes and audio recordings. I then grouped the highlighted words and phrases that were similar, into three categories. The themes that I noticed when analyzing the data included how the use of culturally relevant practices and topics engaged students in Morning Meeting, how students demonstrated empathy and care of their classmates, and how the use of choice was a motivator for student participation in the Morning.

Context

District. The Township of Washington Public Schools (pseudonym) is located in a southern New Jersey town in Gloucester County. The district is home to three elementary schools ranging in grades PK through sixth grade. There are over 1,400 students within the district and about 120 teachers and instructional aids. Education is provided for those in regular education, special education, gifted and talented, and basic skills classes. The Township of Washington Public Schools is considered a Title 1 school district with about 20% of the districts population in need of assistance due to economic factors. Black, Hispanic, Asian and White make up the community population. Of the population, about 12 % speak another language at home (New Jersey Department of Education). According to recent state testing scores, English Language Arts has not met the state average in terms of performance, whereas Mathematics has met the state average.

School. Roads Elementary School (pseudonym) is one of three within the Township of Washington Public School District. The school is home to grades third through fourth grade, consisting of about 417 students and 40 teachers within the school. The school's population consists of ethnically and economically diverse students. Of the 417 students, about 150 of the students receive free or reduced lunch.

Roads School begins each day at 8:12 and ends at 3:02, which is about six hours and forty-five minutes built into the schedule. Both third and fourth grades are departmentalized and switch for Math, Reading, Science and Social Studies. A typical schedule consists of Homeroom/ Enrichment, Mathematics, Language Arts, Special, Recess/Lunch, and Social Studies or Science. To enhance the academics in the classroom, Roads School is equipped with many technology resources. All classrooms are also equipped with desktop computers for teachers, document cameras, one to one student to chrome book ratio as well as new Promethean boards in each classroom.

In addition to academics, Roads School offers their students the opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities. These activities include Odyssey of the Mind, which is the school's gifted and talented program, and clubs including leadership, band, chorus, kickball, and sign language. The clubs are offered twice a year; winter and spring. Each child has the opportunity to participate in at least one of the clubs mentioned above.

Roads School has an active PTO (Parent Teacher Organization) that encourages parent and teacher participation from the community. The PTO meets monthly with the school principal, community members and teachers to make decisions for the school. These decisions include school assemblies, fundraising ideas, Christmas Shoppe, Book

Fairs, and special incentives throughout the year. In addition, the organization also discusses ways to get involved with the community. One event in particular is “Trunk or Treat.” PTO members, teachers, and administration work together to create a safe and fun environment for the children of the Washington Township community to “Trick or Treat.”

Participants. The students participating in the study are fifteen, fourth grade students ranging from the ages of nine to ten years old. Twenty-two students, in total were asked to participate in the study; however, only fifteen students returned consent forms to use their data in the study. Of the fifteen students five are girls and ten are boys. All of the students identify as “white/Caucasian” while one of the students identifies as Hispanic. English is the only language spoken at home and in school. Two of the boys are considered to be gifted and talented and receive enrichment services. Seven of the students are considered basic skills students. These students receive extra support in the classroom during small group instruction. In addition three of the students receive speech and language services.

During the Morning Meeting period, there are no other teachers except myself. All twenty-two students participate in the Morning Meeting session regardless of consent to participate in the data collection as this is a school wide program. Prior to data collection all students were told about the research and their role within the study. The students were asked to participate through verbal consent. The fifteen students who consented to using their data in the study seemed enthusiastic to participate.

Conclusion

The following chapter focuses on the analysis of the data collected within the research study. Common themes were identified that were revealed through the data.

Chapter IV

Findings of the Study

One of the best parts of being a teacher is having the opportunity to provide students with social and emotional skills (in addition to academic skills) that help them build and maintain positive relationships with their peers and significant adults in their lives. When we give students the academic skills they need, they develop academic growth sets and behaviors. Similarly, when we effectively teach students social and emotional skills, we equip them with positive attitudes that help them believe in themselves and in others.

(Amber Searles, 2019)

This chapter focuses on the data collection to help understand the effects on student engagement in culturally relevant Morning Meetings. I begin focusing on the structure of the classroom prior to the implementation of the “culturally relevant” Morning Meeting framework. The previous Morning Meeting framework, suggests a lack of student engagement as well as inconsistencies in student participation. The remainder of the chapter outlines themes that came out of the study. The results of the study are noted within each theme and focus on the topics of participation structures, empathy, and choice.

Prior to Implementing Culturally Relevant Practices in Morning Meeting

Prior to this study, Morning Meeting was utilized to help students and teachers create positive relationships in order to support a positive school climate. The Morning Meeting framework consisted of a greeting, share, activity, and a reflection each morning. Each classroom followed the same framework. To help teachers implement this

in their classrooms successfully, ideas and suggestions were given for each component. A calendar was made for all classrooms and each classroom participated in the same “share” topic each day. The principal and climate committee created these ideas and suggestions. Their hope was that by creating these resources and materials, teachers would feel confident implementing Morning Meeting successfully.

The first few Morning Meetings were exciting and new for the students and so I figured I had mastered the art of Morning Meeting rather quickly. It was not until I started to notice alarming patterns, that I realized something needed to change in regard to how I implemented Morning Meeting in my classroom. Through observation I noticed that the same students participated and the level of engagement seemed to be low as a whole. It seemed as if I was spending most of my time trying to “correct” student behaviors and worked laboriously to make sure they were paying attention. My teacher research journal noted these concerns very early on.

What happened to the excitement today? I thought what the calendar had planned was a good choice and there would have been more participation. Instead I noticed myself trying to get Jackson and Andy (pseudonym) to sit still and pay attention to their peers. I noticed Lee talking to her friend Alex while Karly was sharing for the second time this morning. Getting students to talk was like pulling teeth. (Research Journal 9/10/19)

These observations that I was experiencing were some of the same ones other teachers were experiencing as well.

The Morning Meeting Framework prior to implementation was very much teacher-driven and teacher-created. It was through this framework that I noticed many of

my students were not engaged or motivated to partake in Morning Meetings. In order to approach Morning Meeting differently, that is through culturally relevant and responsive practices, I wanted to get a sense of how students felt about Morning Meeting as well as their thoughts on how I incorporated culturally relevant practices currently. To do this I administered a survey prior to implementation of the new Morning Meeting framework. The survey was also given midway through the study as well as at the end of the study. The pre-survey suggested the current Morning Meeting framework lacked relevancy for students and was not inclusive. Eleven out of fifteen students surveyed felt uncomfortable sharing in Morning Meeting. This feeling toward Morning Meeting is supportive of my observations prior to the implementation of the “new” Morning Meeting. In addition, ten out of fifteen students felt as if the teacher was not supportive of getting to know them or their culture. In figure 1, shown below, the pre- survey results show that there was an overall negative feeling about Morning Meeting.

9/30/19 Yes and 9/30/19 No

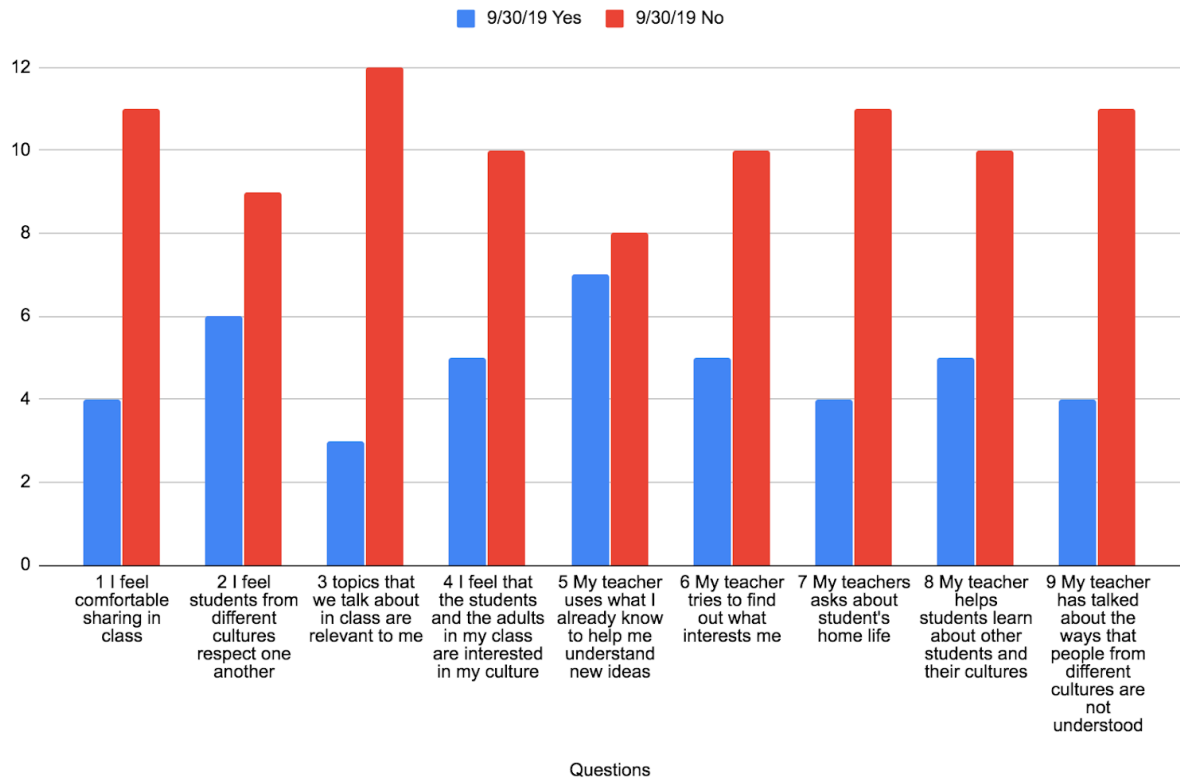


Figure 1. Pre- survey of of student’s attitudes and feelings toward Morning Meeting

Building the Morning Meeting Through Culturally Relevant Practices

Participation structures. After analyzing initial students' thoughts about Morning Meeting I needed to make some changes about how I approached it with the students. Something that I had to think about before students could begin Morning Meeting discussion was to gain insight on how they best like to communicate. Identifying participation structures that the students were comfortable with was one of the areas I was looking to gain more insight about. To do this, the class and I held an informal Morning Meeting session where I asked the students how they wanted to participate. Captured in an audio recording, where the responses of a few students who wanted to participate.

Mrs. V.: Boys and girls, today I wanted to talk to you about Morning Meeting. We will be meeting together each morning to talk about topics that are important to you. When we meet to talk though we will need to make some rules and guidelines to help our talk go smoothly. I want you to think about how you would like to have our conversation. What do you want it to look like? How do you want to take turns?

Karly: (Karly raises her hand to be called on) Well I think we should raise our hands and then you call on us.

Andy: (Andy calls out) Yeah that's what we usually do when a teacher wants us to talk.

Mrs. V.: Are you sure that is how you want to be chosen to talk?

I expected this type of response because this is a typical participation structure that students are used to in school. Students typically raise their hand and the teacher chooses a student to call on. The student responds and so the participation cycle starts over again. Based on the responses of the first two students, it made me wonder if they didn't know of another acceptable way to participate? The following responses demonstrate students thinking about how participation in the classroom can be achieved in other ways.

Lee: (Raises hand to be called on) Yeah I think that is good. This way we can hear what everyone says because if everyone is calling out it will be hard to hear.

Karly: (Raises hand) Maybe actually you can pick sticks because what if the same people want to share and you always call on the same people.

CJ: (Calls out) I like what Karly says. That's fair.

Rob: (Raises hand) But if you pick someone and they don't want to share they don't have to. Like what if I don't care about what we are talking about. I don't want to talk all the time.

Many students nod their head in agreement.

CJ: (Calls out) Ok yeah that is fair too. Maybe the person can say skip or pass. I do that sometimes when my teacher calls on me in Math. She says when we don't want to share we can say pass. I like that, but I like to share so I won't say pass, but some people might want to.

Andy: (Calls out) Yeah I agree.

Mrs. V.: Ok so during our "Share" session, I will pull sticks to have students share. If you don't want to share, then you can say pass or skip.

Students randomly nod their head and call out 'yes.'

(Audio Recording Morning Meeting Session 10/1/19)

After analyzing this first conversation it seemed as if many of the students relied on what they had been taught about participation in the early years of school. While many agreed that raising your hands was an appropriate way to participate, I noticed that as our conversation progressed, some of the students still chose to call out. I did not reprimand or bring attention to the students who were "calling out" however through my observations I noticed many of the students did not seem to mind. The ultimate goal of allowing students to create their own style of participation was to motivate and engage them during Morning Meeting. With that being said, during a Morning Meeting share session I noted students calling out. Figure 2, shown below, shows students who called out during the Morning Meeting Share session.

Morning Meeting Share: Are Video Games Good for Kids?

Lue 	Wade 	Juan	Sean	Jenna
Lindsey	Jackson	Karly 	CJ 	Rob
Alex	Lee	Henry 	Andy 	Gale

Figure 2. Number of times students called out during Morning Meeting session

Based on this tally chart I noticed that students seemed more comfortable in this session than in the previously mentioned share sessions. I wondered if it was due to the fact that students witnessed other students calling out and not being reprimanded for it. Something else that I noticed was that more students participated this time, even if they made one comment. Using a more free-flowing, open discussion model seemed to help students feel comfortable about participating.

Something that I noticed about the Morning Meeting was that the participation structure and norms of the Morning Meaning evolved as more students participated and

added their viewpoints to the previously agreed-upon norms for how they wanted their Morning meeting to run.

During the Morning Meeting today someone suggested that we use an object to identify who is doing the speaking. I had a stuffed animal fish lying around and one of the students said hey maybe we can use this. Many of the other students nodded in agreement. Another student who typically chooses not to take part in the share session added to the conversation that maybe the students could pick who the person was that was going to share. No one disagreed with the idea and many were willing to give it a try. This is the third time the morning meeting “share time” has changed within a week's time. (Research Journal 10/ 9/19)

As the Morning Meeting continued to evolve, I noticed a change in the attitudes and feelings of my students on the Mid-Survey as compared to the Pre- Survey that was given. Figure 3, as shown below, are the results of the mid- survey that was given.

10/30/19 Yes and 10/30/19 No

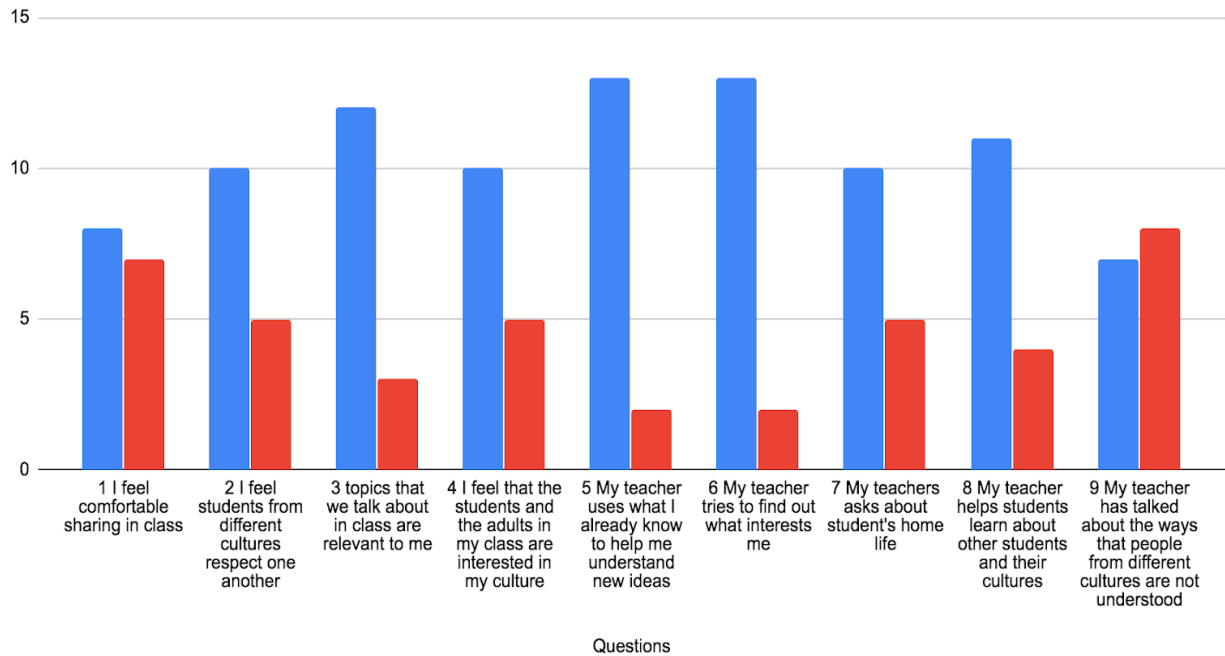


Figure 3. Mid-survey of student’s attitudes and feelings toward Morning Meeting

Based on the findings of the Mid-Survey, eight out of fifteen students feel comfortable sharing in class. This is an improvement as the pre-survey showed four out of fifteen students feeling comfortable sharing in class. In addition, twelve out of fifteen students felt that the topics that were discussed were relevant to them. The pre-survey suggested topics were not relevant to the students. Furthermore, ten out of fifteen students felt that the adults and students in the classroom respect one another, which yet again is another increase from the pre-survey. I can tell my students are beginning to feel more comfortable participating in class discussions due to topics being relevant to them, and the respect from both the teacher and students in the classroom.

Sharing is Caring

Empathy. During the initial Morning Meetings, many students did not feel comfortable enough to share in front of others, resulting in the same students sharing each day. In addition to creating rules and procedures for a cohesive Morning Meeting session, developing student relationships was another goal of this study. The next few Morning Meeting discussions focused on creating a community where students felt safe to share and participate. These discussions also included topics that related to showing empathy and care to help build relationships with others, which was another goal of Morning Meeting. It was from these discussions that students began to feel comfortable sharing information about themselves with others.

Share: How can you show your classmates that you care?

Responses:

Karly: Well when I am talking I always look at the person I am talking to. My teacher last year said that was a good way to let the person know you are talking to that you are listening.

Sean: It is nice to give compliments to each other.

Mrs. V.: What do you mean by that?

Sean: Well you can say I like your shirt or you can say I like your hair.

Jenna: You can help each other in need like if you drop a pencil someone can pick it up for you. Or if they need help with homework you can try and help them.

CJ: I think if someone is playing alone at recess you can play with them. Then they will be like your friend and that shows people that you care because if they don't have anyone to play with and now they do that makes them happy and that makes them think you like them.

- Andy: Well kind of like what Sean said you can say nice things to them. Like if they are different you can say like they are cool and make them feel good.
- Henry: Yeah I agree with Andy. People like to hear good things because it makes them feel good.
- Alex: I agree too. My friend cheered me up when I was sad and she said I did a good job even though I didn't get 'artist of the month.'

(Audio Recording Morning Meeting Session 10/2/19)

In this audio recording, I noticed students explained that they show others they care verbally, such as giving a compliment to someone. This is supportive of my observations because a term that I noticed students used often in their conversation and to relate to one another is "I agree." When students use this term, it is almost as if they are letting their peers know "I have the same feeling or view point as you about this topic."

A way that I modeled empathy for my students was sharing my own personal thoughts and opinions about subjects. For example, many of the students in the class come from single-family homes due to divorce. While this can be a touchy subject among kids, I shared with them that my family is divorced in the hopes of creating a connection with some of them so that they did not feel as if they were the only ones. I noticed that when students feel like they can connect with someone else in the classroom, they are more willing to share and participate.

Juan typically does not participate in Morning Meeting discussion and I noticed is more content in being a silent observer instead of an active participant. In one particular incident though, Juan did share something very personal about his family, the fact that he has two mothers. It was surprising to hear he wanted to share this information, considering his experience with students teasing him about

having two mothers. I could tell it took a lot for him to say. While I thought I was going to see students teasing or laughing, instead there was a student who gave him a ‘fist bump’ and another student who wanted to know if he could hang out with him and his family one day because he likes to also do some of the same things Juan’s family likes to do. (Research Journal 11/5/19)

In this observation, another way that students show empathy for one another is through physical contact. In this particular situation a student gave Juan a “fist bump” as if to say “that’s cool.” Juan’s response was to give the fist bump back and smile at the student. In addition, another student expressed empathy for Juan by asking more about his family and asking to get together one day to hang out. This is an example of how I developed empathy in my students through Morning Meeting. This student was able to make a connection with the student to an activity that he and Juan’s family enjoy doing together. This interaction demonstrates the growth students have made in terms of showing empathy for one another. In my research journal, I noted the lack of empathy in a previous observation.

The topic was ‘Where do you like to go for vacation?’ and I was certain that I’d have a lot of students share all of the interesting places they have been and went to. Instead, while Henry was sharing that his favorite place to vacation is a hotel in Vineland, Lee yelled out ‘That’s not a vacation! That’s just down the road from here. Mrs. Vandine means like a place you visited before that is not around here. Like going to Disney World. That is a vacation.’ As Henry’s eyes welled up, Silvio started snickering while Lindsey yelled at him to stop because ‘That wasn’t funny.’ The rest of the Morning Meeting I tried to fix the chaos that had befallen

on my students. Wasn't this neatly packaged program what they wanted...where did I go wrong? (Research Journal 9/5/19)

Many of the share sessions, such as the previously mentioned ones, led to other opportunities for students to show empathy for one another. Something that I started to notice in the third week of the study was that students' discussions about being empathetic with one another did not only happen during Morning Meeting but also throughout the school day. The use of multicultural texts in my content area lessons was a first this school year. I wanted to use my students' Fund of Knowledge and backgrounds to incorporate stories that mimic the homes and lives of my students into class lessons. It was my hope that the use of these stories would bring about discussions to help students build respect and care for one another. One of the stories that I read was titled *Oliver Button is a Sissy*. I chose this title because there was a boy in the classroom who took part in a school play over the summer and completed a dance number for the show. When I chose this book I thought that the students would be interested, and while they were, I also observed a problem solving opportunity that the students worked out themselves.

Today while reading *Oliver Button is a Sissy*, Wade made a comment out loud after I read that Oliver button likes to draw play with dolls, dress up in costumes, and dance. Out loud he stated 'That's weird why would a boy be doing that.' Before I even had the opportunity to step in, Andy turned around and asked him what was weird about that, he dances and dresses up. Wade responded that boys don't play with those things. Andy even asked him if he thought he was weird because he does do those things. Wade didn't say anything at first. Andy then continued to tell him that he took part in the summer play, got dressed up in

costumes and performed a dancing number along with other boys and girls for the show. At this point other students were chiming in and talked about how their friends we're also in the summer play and they were boys as well. When Wade finally spoke he said that he didn't mean to sound "that way" and that he was sorry if he made Andy upset. He said that even though he would never take part in those activities, it was "cool" that he did those things. They gave each other a fist bump and I was able to continue my lesson. (Research Journal 10/18/19)

In this incident there was conflict. Two people did not agree on the viewpoints presented in the text, which caused a student to pass judgment on another student without realizing it. When Wade was confronted by Andy, while his viewpoint may not have changed, he did demonstrate that he was sorry for the way he spoke and that even though he did not take part in those things, Andy, who did, was still "cool." Wade and Andy exchanged both verbal and physical signs of empathy. The "fist bump" that students are using to show empathy has multiple meanings to them, such as to show support for something, or to say "I'm sorry."

While through my observations I noticed many signs of students building relationships by showing empathy for one another, I wanted to know their thoughts and feelings about how Morning Meeting was going. The data in the following examples suggests that through sharing opportunities and discussions, students are able to develop and build on relationships within the classroom. Learning about other people and the backgrounds they bring to the Morning Meeting session allowed students to also build empathy and respect for one another regardless of differences in thoughts and beliefs. It is through the Morning Meeting share sessions that students were learning what it means

to be a family. In the first journal response, the student explained the ability to speak freely and the ability to see things in a new way (Figure 4). This is connected to the example mentioned above as it shows how one student's thoughts and feelings about something can be viewed differently, but at the same time students can show respect for one another. In the second journal response, the student talks about feeling comfortable in class to share and that it makes him happy to hear that others are interested in what he has to say (Figure 5). This is indicative of empathy, because the student understands that what he shares in class other will be able to connect and empathize with him.

Student Journal

1. Every morning the class gets together to take part in "Morning Meeting." Tell about your thoughts and feelings about Morning Meeting.

Moring meeting is a nice way to share thoughts on subjects. I like how you can speak freely, and you can learn way's to see things in a way you never had before. At

Figure 4. Student Writing Journal # 1

L.D 11/13/19

Student Journal

1. Every morning the class gets together to take part in "Morning Meeting." Tell about your thoughts and feelings about Morning Meeting.

I think morning meeting is a very good way to learn about someone and their past or present stories. I feel very comfortable in morning meeting. I enjoy sharing about myself and how I feel. It makes me happy to know that my classmates want hear about me and how I feel. In conclusion I feel that morning meeting is a good way to socialize with my classmates and teacher.

Figure 5. Student Writing Journal # 2

Using Student’s Funds of Knowledge to Support Choice in the Classroom

The purpose of changing the way I implemented Morning Meeting was to help engage and motivate students to want to be active participants. Many theorists believe that when students are given “choice” it can have many positive benefits in terms of engagement. To investigate this, I incorporated choice into our Morning Meeting sessions by allowing students to decide how they wanted to greet their peers, topics they wanted to share, and activities they wanted to take part in.

“Why hello there!” One of the components of Morning Meeting is the “Greeting.” During this part, students greet one another by acknowledging the people within the Morning Meeting session. Initially the idea of facing someone and speaking to them directly seemed to be uncomfortable for some students. In the beginning students would giggle at one another when they had to greet each other. I knew that this new way of saying “Hello” would take time and so, I incorporated simple greeting gestures such as a fist bump, handshake, and high five into our greeting component. Students fell into a solid routine, but I noticed the “greeting” started to become so rote that students almost seemed bored with how they greeted one another. I asked students for suggestions on how to greet one another and the responses I received were surprising, considering initially Morning Meeting greeting was somewhat of an uncomfortable situation for them.

Today I asked my students how they would like to move forward with greeting each other because I explained that I noticed they seemed bored with it. To my surprise they had interesting ideas. Sean (pseudonym), had suggested that maybe we can say “hi” in different languages. He said because there is someone in the

class who speaks Spanish and he stated “that maybe we can learn new words.”

Another student, Lindsey said that “maybe we can do secret handshakes with someone in the class.” Other suggestions included hugging one another, “elbow shakes,” and saying hello while bowing to one another.

(Research Journal 10/22/19)

In order to support student choice, asking student opinions and getting their suggestions was essential to the success of Morning Meeting. In order to support choice, students were given two suggestions for the day to greet. The class suggested that they should do a brief survey to see which one we would try that day. Each day would include different greetings so as to incorporate student suggestions and to give students choice on how they wanted their Morning Meeting to start.

I noticed that after incorporating these different greetings, the students generally seemed more engaged in the greeting portion of the Morning Meeting. The new language greeting seemed to be one of the students' favorites, as it changed each week. Together, as a class, we decided to make Friday the official new language day. To ensure that students continue to stay engaged during the greeting portion of our Morning Meeting sessions, I continued to take their suggestion in terms of how they want to greet one another. Thus far, eliciting student input has shown to help with overall motivation and engagement.

“What’s on the agenda today?” Often times our Morning Meeting share sessions were dependent upon happenings throughout the school day. Topics that resulted from these happenings included bullying, fairness, rules and procedures outside of the classroom and problem solving to name a few. While I had many students participate,

once they felt comfortable enough to do so, I still felt as if I was not reaching all of my students. Something that I decided to do was to give students choice in terms of what they wanted to talk about. I would give students two possible topics for discussion and then I would have students vote on the topic they wanted to discuss that day, majority wins. I gathered topic ideas through getting-to-know-you activities and back-to-school parent questionnaires. It was clear that when I chose topics that were suggested by the students, more students participated in discussion. The following topics had the most student participation and caused a lot of student discussion:

- Video games and other technology applications (Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube).
- Questions that ask students about themselves (What is your favorite ...What do you like... etc.).
- Student Hobbies (Dance, Cheer, Band, Art, etc.)
- Sports (Student Sports and Professional Sport Topics).

There were times in our Morning Meeting when a particular topic repeated due to having the most votes. For example, an entire week was focused on YouTube and how to become a “Youtuber.” Students voiced their opinions for other topics though by day four of the YouTube topic. In a journal response I noted my observations.

Today I noticed that after how to be a Youtuber was going to be the topic, yet again for Thursday, I noticed students slump back on the floor, some with arms crossed to show disagreement for what we were going to be talking about. A student spoke up and exclaimed ‘can we please just talk about something else? I’m tired of talking about YouTube, I know a lot about it now.’ Many other

students shouted in agreement and so after I brought the idea to the floor about changing our topic by allowing someone else to choose. The students were in agreement that it was fair to let someone else choose the topic to include different topics students like to talk about. Andy suggested the topic; ‘What is a fear that you have?’ Instead of slumping, students, seemed to perk up and more were willing to weigh in on the discussion question (Research Journal 11/20/19)

In this particular situation the students were given choice based on a majority vote of what they wanted to talk about. What I found through my observation, however, is that giving choice can also have drawbacks in terms of how it is approached. While the majority voted to talk about YouTube throughout the week, some of the other students in our discussion circle seemed annoyed and unmotivated to share. What turned this situation around, though, was allowing another option for discussion. Andy felt comfortable enough to explain his thoughts about the current topic and by giving him a voice to demonstrate his choice for discussion, others were also more eager to be a part of the conversation.

“Teamwork makes the dream work.” When thinking of activities to do with my students I had to look within their Funds of Knowledge and their backgrounds in order to support meaningful activities. Through the first couple of weeks of our Morning Meetings and getting to know each other, I found that many of my students enjoy various activities such as soccer, field hockey, track and field and other fitness type curricular. One of the activities that I incorporated in Morning Meeting was “Workout Wednesday.” Each Wednesday I put on a GoNoodle workout video that includes various types of workout routines.

Something else that I learned about my students is that many of them have a wealth of knowledge in other subject areas. One of my students, Henry (pseudonym), told me that he knows a lot about space and the solar system. Rob, loves to draw and sketch in his notebook. Jenna, is an All Star cheerleader and competes in various competitions throughout the year. Something else that these students had in common is that they also like to share are talents with others. I also decided on Tuesdays, I would dedicate that day to allow students to teach us their special talents.

After incorporating the activities based on students' background, it was clear that students enjoyed them more and there was more student participation. In figure 6, as shown below, students voted the “activity” portion as their favorite part of the Morning Meeting.

What is your favorite part of morning meeting?

15 responses

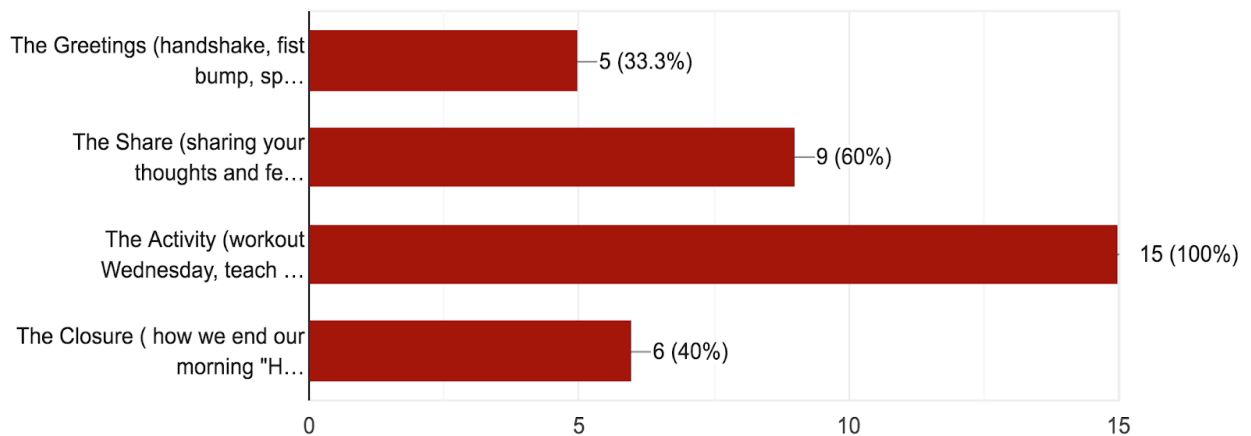


Figure 6. Favorite part of Morning Meeting survey

Conclusion

The findings suggest that when student's background and choice are utilized during Morning Meeting, more students are engaged and motivated to take part in various components of the session. Continuation of the use of these strategies will help to learn more about Morning Meeting and their effects on student participation. The following chapter outlines conclusions and implications from the study. In addition suggestions for further research are discussed as well.

Chapter V

Conclusions

Good Morning Mrs. Vandine we are glad you are here today. Good Morning Boys and Girls, I am so happy you are here today.’ As the students sit in the circle, I see everyone greeting one another with fist bumps, handshakes and hugs. ‘What are we going to talk about today?’ asks Jenna. As I read aloud the share topic for the day, 22 little hands wave in the air waiting eagerly to be chosen to share their thoughts and opinions. The students I met in the beginning of the year look very different than the ones looking at me right now. While it's too early for growth spurts, the growth they made emotionally and socially amazes me. I can't wait to see what the rest of the year brings and what new things I will learn about my students. I no longer have a classroom full of students, but instead a second family. (Research Journal, 11/27/19)

This final chapter reviews the findings of the study and overall conclusions that can be made based on the research findings. In addition, the chapter discusses implications as well as suggestions for future researchers to consider. The chapter concludes with final thoughts.

Summary of the Findings

The purpose of this study was to uncover what happens to student participation when the student's Funds of Knowledge are incorporated into Morning Meeting. To conduct the research, fourth grade students in a South Jersey School District were observed in a natural classroom setting. A teacher's research journal, student surveys, questionnaires, student journals, and tally charts were used to collect data during the

Morning Meeting sessions. The findings suggest that the use of the students' Funds of Knowledge had a positive impact on overall student participation in terms of motivation and engagement. The findings also suggest when culturally relevant and responsive practices as well student choice are utilized in Morning Meeting, there is better student engagement and motivation to participate. Throughout the course of the study, changes in student relationships with peers and teachers as well as an overall positive development of social skills was noted. This, I feel, was due to the incorporation of the student's Funds of Knowledge into the Morning Meeting sessions.

Conclusions of the Study

The main goal of the study was to understand what happens to student participation when the student's Funds of Knowledge were incorporated into Morning Meeting. I wanted to know more about what engages and motivates students to want to participate in Morning Meetings. To help to understand the ways in which I could do this, I researched ways to motivate and engage students through their cultural and home backgrounds. This study is supportive of past and current research, which highlights the findings of this study.

Based on the research, it can be concluded that the use of students' cultural and home backgrounds supports overall student motivation and engagement in terms of participation in Morning Meeting. The use of student's interests and backgrounds supported a variety of student discussion topics and activity ideas to help run the Morning Meeting. Prior to the implementation of students' backgrounds, topics and activities were chosen for them and many were not relatable to the students. Taylor and Parsons (2011) point out that relevancy is a determining factor of student engagement. When

students are confronted with real life situations instead of theoretically based scenarios, the more engaged they are. With that being said, the incorporation of topics based on their backgrounds and life situations helped to make Morning Meeting engaging for them. Learning about the students' Funds of Knowledge helped to support many of the elements within Morning Meeting. Students who typically did not participate, suddenly began participating through their voice and actions within Morning Meeting.

Relationships began to develop which is a major goal of the Morning Meeting framework. Gonzalez et al. (2005) explain that through their own research, teachers who use their students' Funds of Knowledge and incorporate the information into the classroom setting, have better relationships with their students. As students build relationships among peers and adults the more comfortable they are participating during the Morning Meeting session.

Another conclusion that can be drawn from this study is that choice is another factor that is supportive of student motivation and engagement. Gay (2018) believes that giving students choice in making decisions about their learning journey allows students to feel empowered, which is an important element of culturally responsive teaching. This was true based on the experiences within the Morning Meeting sessions. After noticing that students were beginning to tire of the same routines and talk of Morning Meeting, the incorporation of student choice helped to bring back student engagement and motivation that was beginning to lack. Giving students choice also gave students an active voice in Morning Meeting and allowed me, as the facilitator, to see new ways of managing Morning Meeting with new eyes. Pinto and Vogel (2016) have used the strategy of asking students their feedback or viewpoint in terms of classroom management, and they

have found that students feel a sense of importance to the classroom community. Additionally this type of interaction with teacher and students creates a sense of community and builds rapport among teacher and students (Pinto and Vogel, 2016, 139). Once my students felt comfortable with being open with me and the other students in the classroom, they were more willing to offer suggestions on how they want their Morning Meeting to be run. When students saw their own ideas being incorporated into Morning Meeting, they were more willing to participate.

Participation structures were also examined in this study. Another conclusion that can be drawn is that when open discussion structures are utilized, more students are willing to participate in class conversations. The participation that took place during Morning Meeting is what Au (1980) would describe as “Open Turns.” In Open Turns “at least three children speak and they seem to share an equal status as speakers” (Au, p. 105). During the Morning Meeting session I posed a question, and then the students had the opportunity to share their thoughts and feelings about the topic. Students were also allowed to interject the conversation with a thought they had without being reprimanded for “calling out.” While the students suggested that turns should be taken among the speakers in Morning Meeting, they also did not seem to care when other students came into the conversation. This allowed students, who may have felt uncomfortable to have all eyes on them while speaking, a non-threatening way to participate in the discussion.

Delpit (1988) uses the term “Culture of Power ” to describe a dominant culture’s rules and procedures for participation within that particular group. In school, this is noted though mainstream educational beliefs and practices. Prior to the reconstruction, Morning Meeting’s structure was a rigid framework each classroom in the school followed. The

same greetings, sharing topics, activities, and reflections were consistent among each classroom. A final conclusion that I made was that when students became a part of the construction of the rules and procedures of how *they* wanted *their* Morning Meeting to look, the more students were engaged throughout the meetings. Delpit (1988) argues that the “teacher cannot be the only expert in the classroom. To deny students their own expert knowledge is to disempower them” (p. 288). Allowing students to create their own Morning Meeting framework helped to negate a “Culture of Power” within the classroom and supported student leadership. This leads to the success of the Morning Meeting and overall student engagement.

Implications

Because this study demonstrated positive effects on student engagement, it can offer valuable information in terms of how teachers can help to motivate and engage their students to participate in class. Through the use of students' Funds of Knowledge, student engagement and motivation to participate has increased. Even though the benefits of using students' Funds of Knowledge can have a positive impact on the classroom environment and climate, often times educators do not use this most powerful resource.

There are many reasons why the use of culturally relevant and responsive techniques such as utilizing students Funds of Knowledge, are not being used by all educators. Gay (2003) argues that in order to be culturally critical conscious, teachers need to be able to understand their own cultures and the cultures of different ethnic groups including how this affects teaching and behaviors. Lack of knowledge about other cultures is common in many schools. Often times educators accept the mainstream instructional strategies and ideologies that are “supposed” to be effective for all students.

Au (2009), would argue, however, that this ideology does not fit the needs of all students and that, in fact, teachers have a better chance at success when instruction is responsive to student's cultural backgrounds. In addition, using this knowledge can help to support a positive classroom climate.

Some would argue that obtaining this knowledge takes a lot of time to do and many teachers do not have the time to waste because of district or school agendas. I would argue that obtaining this knowledge is possible and will in fact save teachers time in the future. One way educators can do this is to get to know the families of the students they teach. "Getting to know your child" activities during back to school night for example can yield a lot of information that the teacher may not be able to obtain during the school day. While back to school night is typically seen as a night to get to know the teacher, making it about getting to know the families as well can help to understand a student's Funds of Knowledge. Giving families the opportunity to have open dialogue during back to night, through casual conversations, can also help to dig into students' home life and cultural backgrounds. Gonzalez et al (2005) explains that when teachers learn about their families and then utilize this knowledge, not only is it critical in motivating children, but parents are motivated as well because they feel important and empowered which in turn helps to build the climate of school and home relationships. Building home and school relationships is critical to the success of the classroom.

Another way that teachers can obtain this knowledge is through activities conducted in the beginning of the school year to get to know students better. Building a solid foundation in the beginning of the school year sets the tone for the rest of the year. Emmons (2011) reflects on his past first days of school and admits that the getting to

know each other activities, learning procedures and having fun in order to help build relationships among one another had a positive impact. He goes on to state that this was so much more important and starting with the academics (The Responsive Classroom; The First Day of School, 2011).

Some may argue that the incorporation of Morning Meeting into the current class schedule is impossible. While the responsive classroom outlines several components to their Morning Meeting framework, I would argue that Morning Meeting could take on various styles. It is through my experience that a Morning Meeting can be conducted within 15 to 20 minutes and includes all of the components outlined in Kriete and Davis's Morning Meeting book. The responsive classroom outlines several goals hoped to be accomplished through Morning Meeting. These goals include developing social and emotional competencies such as cooperation, assertiveness, responsibility, empathy, and self-control (Responsive Classroom; Principles and Practices, 2019).

Limitations

During the course of this study, there were some limitations that could have had an impact on the results of the study. Although my entire fourth grade class had the opportunity to participate in the study, the group of students that I worked with were mostly white and English speaking. Students with different racial and ethnic backgrounds were not part of the study due to the makeup of the classroom. Each student in the classroom identified as white, with one student identifying as Hispanic. Therefore, diverse cultural characteristics did not help to shape the Morning Meeting sessions in the classroom. Another limitation of the study was time. The Morning Meeting session time frame was 15-20 minutes. There were times in the study that the Morning Meeting was

cut short or where students had to leave during Morning Meeting to receive school related services. With that being said, it was difficult at times to keep Morning Meeting consistent. If Morning Meeting was consistent, it could have altered students' thoughts and opinions of Morning Meeting. Finally, another limitation was that the study did not take place the length of the school year. Conducting research for the entire school would have yielded additional data as well as have given students and myself the opportunity to see how Morning Meeting continued to evolve.

Suggestions for Future Research

Further research in terms of understanding what motivates and engages students will always be helpful to educators. With the education field changing constantly, finding new and creative ways to engage and motivate our students is something that has and will continue to be a job requirement for educators. Morning Meeting sessions have brought about many surprises throughout the duration of the study. Conducting this research throughout the entire year as opposed to half of the year, however, may yield additional or new information. In addition new knowledge that is learned about students could be applied to future Morning Meeting sessions. Another suggestion for future research is to encourage researchers to select populations that include different racial and ethnic backgrounds. Using participants from different cultural backgrounds may yield new information in regard to how students communicate within one another and how participatory structures are formed. One way to do this would be to observe students in natural communication settings such as during recess or lunch to examine how they communicate with their peers. To take this a step further, the researcher may also want to conduct home studies to see how students communicate with family in the household.

Something else that I would encourage future researchers to do is to utilize students' parents and guardians within the study. There are many avenues researchers can take in order to obtain student information from parents. As mentioned previously, getting to know the families of the children we teach can help to create positive relationships between home and school. I would also be curious to know how parental involvement can impact student participation within the Morning Meeting framework.

Final Thoughts

In closing, incorporating students Funds of Knowledge into the classroom can have positive effects on students' motivation and engagement. Previous research suggests that one of the most effective ways to support student motivation and engagement is through the incorporation of culturally relevant and responsive practices. Through this research I have grown, not only as an educator, but also as a human being. The way I run my Morning Meeting will forever be different, and different is good. Building positive relationships in the classroom can make a lasting impact. It is my hope that through this research educators will be willing to try these practices to promote student engagement and lasting relationships with their students. Utilizing the Morning Meeting framework can support this effort.

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