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MORNING MEETINGS AND HOW THEY CREATE A COMMUNITY IN THE
CLASSROOM

by
Kelly McKnight

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Science in Teaching Degree
of
The Graduate School
at
Rowan University
June 30, 2008

Approved by _____

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ABSTRACT

Kelly McKnight
MORNING MEETINGS AND HOW THEY CREATE A COMMUNITY IN THE
CLASSROOM

2007/2008

Dr. Susan Browne
Master of Science in Teaching

The purpose of this thesis was to examine how morning meetings create a community in the classroom, particularly which activities are most effective and how students respond to daily morning meetings. For the first twenty minutes of the morning, the students participated in a daily morning meeting. The students greeted one another, had the opportunity to share, participated in whole group activities, and read a daily news and announcements letter. The greeting, whole group activities, and daily news and announcements letters changed daily. The students all had the opportunity to run different parts of the morning meetings. The data was collected and analyzed using two sociograms, focus group discussions, and teacher research journal. The analysis revealed that morning meetings had many positive effects on the students and the classroom. This positive impact will continue to help the students in the future. The morning meeting allowed acceptance and understanding, which led to great things in the classroom. Implications for teaching are discussed.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Scope of Study

It is 8:55 am on Monday morning. The first graders are beginning to pour into the classroom, unpack their book bags, and get ready for the day ahead of them. As the students finished unpacking, Ms. McKnight gains her students' attention by clapping her hands. The students promptly clap in return, and Ms. McKnight says, "It is just about time for the morning meeting to begin. Please finish unpacking quickly and join me on the carpet." Those who are already done unpacking move quickly and quietly to the rug and begin to form a circle. Those who are not quite done unpacking yet scramble to get their things put away and hurry over to the rug to join the rest of their classmates in the circle. "Good morning boys and girls!", says Ms. McKnight. "I'm so glad to see all of your smiling faces. As we know, Joseph is going to run the greeting part of the morning meeting today." "Joseph, are you ready?" asked Ms. McKnight. "Yes!" replied Joseph as he jumped to his feet. "Great! Let's begin" says Ms. McKnight and Joseph starts to lead the greeting. Joseph teaches the students how to say Hello in Korean. Every student says Hello in Korean to another student in the room and shakes their hand. Now that the greeting is done, it is time for the sharing part of the morning meeting. Lauren is first. She stands up and begins to talk about the bear she brought in today for sharing. Lauren says, "This is my bear. His name is Snowflake. My mom gave him to me when I was just a baby. I have had him ever since. I sleep with him every night, but sometimes I wake up in the morning and find him on the ground. I'm ready for questions." Immediately,

hands shot up like they came out of a rocket. Lauren called on one her classmates, Patrick. "I sleep with my frog every night and find him on the floor sometimes too!" exclaimed Patrick very enthusiastically. "Me too!" replied some of the other students. The sharing continued with three more students talking about their weekend or an object they brought into school. Each sharing session was followed by questions and comments from their peers. Next was the group activity. It was Michael's turn to choose and run the activity. He decided to play categories. The category that he chose was food. The students went around the circle and each named a type of food in alphabetical order. The room quickly filled with laughter and smiles. News and announcements were next. The students all turned to a piece of chart paper on the easel containing a letter written by Ms. McKnight. The letter discussed what exciting things that students had to look forward this week. The class read the letter with the assistance of Katie. After reading the letters, Kaite called on different students to come up to the easel and correct the mistakes. When this is done Ms. McKnight asked, "Are there any questions?" No one raised their hand. "Okay," said Ms. McKnight said. "That is the end of our morning meeting. Please return to your seats and take our reading notebooks out." With that the students quietly got up and moved back to their seats. The school day had begun.

Purpose Statement

My research study will focus on morning meetings and what aspects of these meetings help create a community among the students in a classroom. As stated by R. Peterson, "community in itself is more important to learning than any other method or technique. When community exists, learning is strengthened- everyone is smarter, more ambitious, and productive. Well- formed ideas and intentions amount to little without a

community to bring them to life.” (Bartel, 2005, p. 151) A morning meeting is one way of creating a community within the classroom.

A morning meeting is a type of classroom meeting. A classroom meeting is a regularly held meeting with all of the students and teachers in the classroom. These meetings are usually student-led for the majority of the meeting. Classroom meetings can be used for a large variety of purposes (Horsch, et al., 1999). I’m focusing upon the community aspect.

Classroom meetings when done regularly builds a sense of belonging, caring, and trust (Edwards & Mullis, 2003.) Many things can be done during this time, such as classroom decision making, conflict resolution, sharing, appreciation and compliment session with one another, and so much more. Each of these things can bring the entire class together and form a community.

There are also many different formats of classroom meetings that the teacher can use. For my study, I am using the Morning Meeting format, which is a part of the Responsive Classroom Approach.

The Responsive Classroom Approach was created by the Northeast Foundation for Children and its purpose is to create more caring children (Horsch, et al., 2002). There are six components of a responsive classroom, which are the following: morning meeting, rules and logical consequences, guided discovery, classroom organizations, academic choice, and assessment and reporting to parents. Each of these components works together and works separately to create a community. Morning meetings are a vital part of a responsive classroom (Horsch, et al., 1999).

As stated by Horsch, Chen and Nelson (1999, p24), “The morning meeting builds a sense of community while setting a positive tone for the day.” Morning meetings are usually conducted at the start of the school day. These meetings are divided into four components, which are the following: greeting, sharing, group activity, and news and announcements. Morning meetings allow the students to gather together in the morning “to greet one another, to listen and respond to one another’s news, to practice academic and social skills, and to look forward to the day’s events.” (Kriete, 2003, p. 68).

Morning meetings are the first step to creating a community. When students walk into their classroom on the first day, the students do not instantly become a community. The students must first learn each other’s names, nicknames, and other things about each other, such as interests, pets, family members, favorite food, etc. (Kriete, 2003). Morning meetings help students get to know each other. Students start doing activities together, and share in happy and sad moments. Morning meetings help students quickly feel accepted. They create a family climate, and more students are willing to help each other (Bondy and Ketts, 2001). Kriete (2003) explains that morning meetings, when done correctly, “weave a web that binds a class together in a community.” Morning meetings represent a necessary piece of becoming a classroom community.

Morning meetings create community between the students, but also set the tone for learning for the day (Kriete, 2003). Morning meetings inform students that everyone matters. Everyone is greeted, students can communicate news, and students work cooperatively together. Morning meetings create a caring classroom environment (Kriete, 2003). Morning meetings also provide students time to get themselves settled into the day before academics begin (Bondy and Ketts, 2001). Morning meetings also

foster trust. This is important for risk taking. Students must take risks in order to learn. Trust allows students to feel comfortable in the classroom and therefore, become risk takers when learning (Kriete, 2003). Students become leaders of morning meetings. This allows them to take on responsibility. Students gain self- confidence and in turn, it helps them succeed in academics (Bondy and Ketts, 2001). Morning meetings benefit the classroom greatly and help start each day on a great note.

Morning meetings have many benefits for the classroom, particularly in creating a classroom community, but only when done correctly. This is why it is important to study morning meetings. There is a lot said about each component of a morning meeting and the various benefits that come from conducting daily morning meetings, but very little is stated about what aspects of a morning meetings are vital in creating a community. By learning, which parts of a morning meeting create a community, teachers can better run their morning meetings. This learning can be done through an experiment of different types of greetings and group activities. Student's opinions will also be a vital part of the research. Very little research has been done looking at student's thoughts and reactions towards morning meetings and its various components. This is important because the students play a major role in the meetings, and the morning meetings are suppose to benefits them the most. Therefore, the study of morning meetings will be beneficial to many teachers.

Research Question

Since we know that morning meetings help create a community within the classroom, the question guiding this research study is "How does a morning meeting

create a community in the classroom? What are the most effective activities in a morning meeting? How do students respond to daily morning meetings?”

Story of Question

In order to understand the selection of my topic and my position in regards to my topic, I will begin by explaining to you how I came to my decision. All of my education courses through my career as a college student have focused up creating a learning community in the classroom. We have learned about and seen first hand the many benefits, both educational and social, of a classroom community. We have also learned different activities that can be done to help create a community, but I always wondered when would I have time to fit in these fun activities? Is there one thing that I can do on a regular basis that would help form my classroom into a community? Morning meetings are the answer to these questions.

As a teacher candidate, I was invited to in- service days prior to the first day of school at my practicum site. One of the topics on the first day was morning meeting. This was something new that the teachers were required to conduct every morning in their class beginning on day one. The topic caught my attention. A teacher, who has always used morning meetings, introduced and discussed the four elements of a morning meeting. As the teacher talked about each part of the morning meeting, I thought “Wow! What a great way to start the day!” The teacher conducted a morning meeting with the staff members at the in- service. We were shown various things that we could done with each part of the morning meeting. It was fun, and I really began to see how it could be enjoyable and beneficial to students and their class.

I observed morning meetings for the next couple of weeks in a fourth grade classroom. The teacher conducted them just because she had to, and the students were not getting into them. It made me think, “What exactly needs to be done in these meetings for the students to become more involved, enjoy them, and led to the creation of a community?”

The in-service and observation of the morning meetings inspired me to look deeper into morning meetings and to examine exactly what aspects of a morning meeting create a community and what I can do to enable the students to get as much as possible out of these meetings.

What's Next?

The rest of this thesis digs deeper into morning meeting and its influential aspects on creating a community among the students. Chapter two examines existing literature on classroom meetings more in-depth. The topics that are discussed include what a classroom meeting is, various purposes and formats of classroom meetings, the Responsive Classroom and its morning meeting, classroom examples of morning meetings, and teachers' and students' thoughts and reactions to morning meetings. Chapter three outlines the research plan for the study, discusses the collection of the data, and describes the participants in the study. Chapter four outlines the various data sources used along with an analysis and interpretation of the data. Chapter five discusses the final findings and conclusion.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

Chapter Two is a review of the literature regarding classroom meetings in the elementary school setting. The first section discusses what a classroom meeting is, the various purposes of a classroom meeting, and the different formats of classroom meetings. The second section focuses upon the morning meeting, as described by the Responsive Classroom Approach. This section will briefly describe the Responsive Classroom Approach and discuss the morning meeting. The last section will discuss previous studies done on morning meetings in the classroom and schools and their outcomes. The last section will also discuss teachers' and students' thoughts and reactions towards morning meetings. Chapter Two will end with a discussion of how this particular study will add to the research on how morning meetings create a community, particularly what are the most effective activities and what do students respond to daily morning meetings?

Classroom Meeting and its Purposes

“In many ways, the classroom is a curious setting. Assigned to classes that may contain strangers, perhaps even adversaries, students are expected to interact harmoniously. Crowded together, they are required to ignore the presence of others. Urged to cooperate, they usually work in competition. Pressed to take responsibility for their learning, they must follow the dictates of a dominant individual- the teacher.” (Edwards & Mullis, 2003, p.20). Classroom meetings are one way to bring students

together, build a community within the classroom, and teach and model expectations to students.

A classroom meeting is a daily or weekly meeting with all of the students and the teacher. Classroom meetings are mostly student led and serve a large variety of purposes. Teachers use classroom meetings for different reasons including building a community in the classroom, teaching and practicing social skills, and for academic purposes.

Building a community within the classroom is important and can be a foundation for the entire year. As described by Bartel (2005), “Community in itself is more important to learning than any method or technique. When community exists, learning is strengthened- everyone is smarter, more ambitious, and productive. Well- formed ideas and intentions amount to little without a community to bring them (p.151).” Many teachers use classroom meetings as a time to build a community among the students. These meeting, especially when done on a daily basis, build a sense of belonging, caring and trust among the students (Edwards & Mullis, 2003). Classroom meetings can be a time when students come together to make a decision or solve a problem as a class (National Education Association). Classroom meetings can also give students an opportunity to share something personal to them with their peers. An appreciation and compliment session can be done, where student thank or compliment another student in the classroom. Classroom meetings can also contain a group activity where students work together as a whole to do something. All of these things help build a community among students and foster important support for learning that Bartel (2005) describes.

Classroom meetings can be used a time to teach, model, and practice social skills (Edwards & Mullis, 2003). Cartledge and Millburn (1978) argue that “the development

of certain prerequisite social skills may be crucial to the academic instructional experience as well as the overall success of the individual student (p 133).” They believe that the classroom serves as the perfect setting for teaching socially acceptable behavior (Cartledge & Millburn, 1978). Classroom meetings provide students with an opportunity to practice actively listening to others and responding appropriately (Horsch, Chen, & Nelson, 1999). Classroom meetings also encourage students to be risk-takers and take leadership roles (Horsch, et al., 1999). Teachers and other students model appropriate social skills during the classroom meeting, and this in turn helps students develop crucial social skills as described by Cartledge and Millburn.

Classroom meetings are used to teach conflict resolution (Frey & Doyle, 2001). Johnson and Johnson (1996) argue that classroom teachers spend a large amount of time and energy managing classroom conflicts. They state that resolving conflicts in a cooperative setting and in a cooperative manner teaches students a constructive and healthy way to solve problems (Johnson & Johnson, 1996). Classroom meetings provide the cooperative environment for conflict resolution that Johnson and Johnson are referring to.

Classroom meetings can be a time to focus on academics, but in a more open forum that is student-led. Cook-Sather (2006) argues that students “have a unique perspective on learning, teaching, and schooling (p.1).” The author states that student voice initiates the inquiry process within a classroom (Cook-Sather, 2006). Classroom meetings offer a great opportunity for students to discuss their thoughts and feelings towards various topics. This can initiate the inquiry process before a topic is taught and

provides the teacher with an opportunity to learn her students' perspective on a topic, as Cook- Sather described.

Classroom meetings can have various purposes and offer different opportunities to both the teacher and the students, which may not always be offered during a regular classroom time. It is a good way for teachers to focus upon different things that they may otherwise overlook. Classroom meetings help to open the doors to many different things for both teachers and students.

Format of Classroom Meetings

Classroom meetings should be held in a circle. The circle is a universal symbol for unity and wholeness (Edwards & Mullis, 2003). It is important to form a circle for the classroom meeting because it lets the students know that everyone is equal. According to Rosenfield, Lambert and Black (1985), teachers should arrange students in a circle because the students tend to interact more and exhibit more on-task behaviors when placed in a circle. Classroom meetings should be student led a majority of the time. Every student should participate in classroom meetings. Everyone may not be able to participate in every meeting, but should participate as often as possible.

Classroom meetings can be held as an open meeting, or a more structured meeting. When conducting an open meeting, there is usually one topic that is discussed (Emmett, 1996). This topic can be a problem, either whole class or individual, that the class works together to solve, a decision that the entire class need to make, or a discussion about a certain topic, which is usually academic (Emmett, 1996). There can also be more structure meetings, where certain things are done every time. For example,

students may conduct a group activity together during a classroom meeting to practice a certain social skill, or have a time for individual student sharing.

Some classroom meetings are very structured in format, such as the Responsive Classroom's Morning Meeting. This will be the format that I will follow when conducting my research.

Morning Meeting

Morning meeting is a component of the Responsive Classroom Approach. The Responsive Classroom Approach was created by Northeast Foundations for Children. Their purpose is help students act in more caring ways (Horsch, Chen, & Wagner, 2002). There are six components, which are the following: morning meeting, rules and logical consequences, guided discovery, classroom organization, academic choice, and the assessment and reporting to parents. Each of these work together and alone to assist in the student development of various social skills, including cooperation, assertion, responsibility, empathy, and self-control. Each component also works to engage students more in their learning, develop decision making skills, and motivate learning (Horsch, et al., 2002).

Morning meeting is a daily morning ritual in many classrooms. It is usually the first activity of the school day. The teacher and students gather together in a circle. Morning meeting has four parts, which are the following: greeting, sharing, group activity, and news and announcements (Kriete, 2003). The greeting part of a morning meeting helps students work on their social skills as described earlier by Cartledge and Millburn. The greeting enables the students to learn and practice how to properly greet someone. Sharing also enables students to focus upon the crucial social skills Cartledge

and Millburn discuss. The students practice speaking to others and responding appropriately. Sharing also gives students the power of student voice. Students are able to talk about anything they wish during this time. It can allow the teacher and other students to learn that student's perspective on a certain topic, as described by Cook-Sather in his article. The group activity helps build a community in the classroom and create the type of classroom Bartel describes in his article. The news and announcements part of the morning meeting is used to excite the students about their day and learning by informing them of the days and/or weeks events.

As we can see, classroom meetings are designed to create a very positive environment and can be used in the classroom to do many different things. We will look at several different classrooms that used morning meetings and their outcome. I will also discuss different teachers' and students' responses towards morning meeting.

School-Wide Use of Morning Meetings

Several schools in Chicago have used morning meetings throughout the entire school and have seen success. In the fall of 1996, John B. Murphy Elementary School started mandatory morning meetings in every classroom (Horsch, et al., 1999). Their faculty meetings also begin with a morning meetings. The school as a whole saw positive changes in the students. The school became a more caring environment, behavior improved, and students developed more sophisticated social skills (Horsch, et al., 1999). The principal contributed this to a greater sense of stability in the school, because the students were aware of the daily events. Many students' scores also rose on tests. The principal contributed this to the students feeling more comfortable in school and taking risks because they feel safe. Attendance also increased because students enjoyed being in

school (Horsch, et al., 1999). Teachers and students at the Murphy Elementary school enjoy the morning meetings. The students like being able to interact in different ways with their peers. The teachers felt like they were able to get to know their students in different ways, and this also helped the teachers when they used structured learning activities (Horsch, et al., 1999). Parents also expressed their support for morning meetings. They said that their children shared things that they learned in morning meetings at home, such as songs, games, and some even created a news and announcements chart (Horsch, et al., 1999). The Murphy Elementary school benefits greatly from morning meetings.

The Nolan and the Trujillo Elementary schools in Chicago also began to incorporate daily morning meetings in their schools and saw success. Some of the teachers at Nolan Elementary used morning meeting as a time to teach students how to get along with their peers and helped them fix hurt feelings (Horsch, et al., 2002). These classrooms turned into a more caring community. The teachers at Trujillo Elementary viewed morning meetings as a time to welcome students who traveled to come to school and help them get ready for the day (Horsch, et al., 2002). As we can see, morning meetings helped these Chicago schools in many positive ways.

Teachers' View

Many teachers who use morning meetings on a daily basis view them as a positive aspect of the classroom (Horsch, et al., 2002). One teacher from one of the schools in Chicago feels that morning meetings create a connection in the school because everyone is doing the same thing at the same time (Horsch, et al., 2002). Another Chicago teacher added that morning meetings create unity in both the school and the

classroom (Horsch, et al., 2002). Another teacher stated that she feels that morning meetings do not take away from the academics. Morning meetings can be used to solve problems that could have come up later and taken the same amount of time, if not more time, to resolve (Horsch, et al., 2002). These Chicago teachers saw a lot of benefits in conducting daily morning meetings.

Teachers from other schools around the United States love morning meetings and view them as a way to open the door to conversations that may not have occurred otherwise (Northeast Foundations for Children). 9-11 was a tough time for everyone, especially children. Many teachers used morning meeting as an opportunity to talk with the students about everything that was currently going on (Northeast Foundations for Children). A teacher in Massachusetts used morning meeting to clear up any misconceptions and helped her students see the difference between what was real and what was on their video games (Northeast Foundations for Children). Another teacher in Paterson, New Jersey used the news and announcements to set the tone for the meeting and give her students an opportunity to talk about their feelings. One teacher explained, “Without the scaffolding of morning meeting, all these conversations would not have been so easy for us (Northeast Foundation for Children, p. 2).” Another teacher added, “The caring, sharing, and empathy that were being developed in morning meeting made it so much easier to talk about this tragedy in a safe and supportive environment (Northeast Foundation for Children, p. 2).” These teachers value morning meetings, because it sets the classroom up for teaching opportunities that may not occur otherwise. These teachers see great benefit in the use of daily morning meetings. As we can see, teachers who use

morning meetings do so because of all the positive benefits that can come out of them.

Students also like morning meetings.

Students' View

Many students who are apart of daily morning meetings enjoy them. When asked what word they would use to describe morning meetings, many students used words such as fun, funny, laughing, happy, and smiling (Bondy & Ketts, 2001). The students like being able to get to know each other. One student said, "You learn to get along with each other, and you get to know each other's lives. So if someone feels bad you know that person and you could help them." (Bondy & Ketts, 2001, p. 3) Another student like being known and said, "When people greet me, it makes me feel good (Bondy & Ketts, 2001, p. 3)." Students like the sharing component of the morning meeting, because it gives them a safe place to express their feelings and concerns. One student said, "One thing I'm glad I did today was share about my Great Uncle John. It made me feel better (Perlman, 2006, p. 1)." Other students see morning meetings as a warm- up for the day and use this time to wake up and prepare themselves for the school day. The students also enjoy the responsibility given to them during morning meetings. They like the opportunity to take total control in the classroom (Bondy & Ketts, 2001). As we can see, many students enjoy morning meetings and use them as opportunities to get to know each other, express themselves, and take responsibility.

Conclusion

As the review of literature suggests, morning meetings are a great tool for the classroom, especially when creating a community. Many different activities can be done during the morning meeting, including teaching and practicing social skills, teaching and

practicing conflict resolution, and open class discussions. These activities help create a community within the classroom, and morning meetings offers a forum in which this can be done. The three Chicago Elementary schools are proof that morning meeting do assist in creating a community.

Unfortunately, there is a little research done on morning meetings. Therefore, it is important for more research to be done. It is hoped that this study will provide more research on morning meetings, particularly on how they create a community. This study will look at what activities seem to be the most effective when done in a morning meeting setting and allow students to voice their opinions on morning meetings.

What's Next

The next chapter outlines the research plan for the study. It discusses the collection of the data including the various sources of data that were used. Chapter three also describes the participants of the study.

CHAPTER THREE

Research Content and Design

Introduction

Daily morning meetings help create a community in the classroom. This study will examine how a morning meeting creates a community in the classroom, particularly what activities are the most effective. The study will also examine students' thoughts and reactions to morning meetings.

The design of this study is teacher research. Teacher research is an inquiry into learning in the classroom. I used a qualitative approach for the data collection. I collected data using sociograms, focus group discussions, and my own teacher research journal and used the data to examine how morning meetings create a community within the classroom.

Context of the Study

District

The Winslow Township Public Schools serves over 6,500 students in pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade. Winslow Township is located the most southern tip of Camden County, New Jersey. The district provides education for children who reside in the following communities: Sicklerville, Blue Anchor, Waterford, Cedar Brook, Tansboro, Braddock, Winslow and Elm. Winslow Township has been and remains to be a family- oriented, agricultural community (Winslow Township Public Schools).

School

Overwood School is located in Winslow Township and students in Pre-Kindergarten through Second Grade attend this school. According to the *New Jersey Department of Education 2006- 2007 School Report Card*, there are approximately 514 students are enrolled in the school and English is the first language spoken at home for 98.4% of the students. The average size of each class is approximately 16.5 students. The administrator to student ratio is 1:49 and the faculty member to student ratio is 1:9.6. The school day is approximately six hour, beginning at 9:25 am and ending at 3:25. The approximate cost per student during the 2006- 2007 school year was \$12,149.

Participants

There are twenty first grade students involved in this study. All of the students in one first grade inclusion classroom were solicited for this study. Only students who returned a permission slip signed by a parent or guardian were allowed to participate in the study. The participants were both male and female. They are six and seven years old. Approximately 20% of the students are classified and had either Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) or 504 plans. An IEP is an educational plan designed for a student with a disability. Each plan is individualized to meet the needs of that particular student. A 504 plan is also a plan designed to meet the needs of a student with a disability. This student may not qualify for an IEP but still needs some accommodations. Approximately 20% of the students are in the school's gifted and talented program. Approximately 35% of the participants are Caucasian, 60% are African American, and 5% are Asian. According to school records, approximately 65% of the students come from two parent households and 35% come from single-parent households.

Focus Group

There are six students in the focus group. These students are all in the first grade inclusion classroom. These students are selected to participate in small group discussions throughout the study. The participants in the focus group are both male and female. One of the students is classified and has an IEP. Two of the students are in the gifted and talented program at the school. Three of the students are Caucasian, two of the students are African American, and one student is Asian. According to school records, half of the students come from two parent households and half come from single- parent households.

Research Design

For this study, the actual instruction was daily morning meetings. Morning meetings are daily twenty minute meetings with all of the students and myself. The morning meeting is usually the first activity of the school day. There are four parts of the morning meeting, which are as followed: the greeting, sharing, group activity, and news and announcements. The research design for this study used a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is a type of subjective research which is used to analyze people's actions and words. Data collection included sociograms, small group discussions, and my own teacher research journal. Overlapping themes and concepts were identified to determine how morning meetings create a community in the classroom and the effectiveness of activities used during morning meetings. The study lasted approximately five weeks.

Actual Instruction

I conducted a daily morning meetings. This morning meetings lasted about twenty minutes. The format that was used for the morning meeting is the Responsive Classroom's Morning Meeting. There are four components, which are the following:

greeting, sharing, group activity, and news and announcements. During the greeting, every student and teacher was greeted by someone else in the classroom. The greeting ranged from a simple good morning in English or another language to a more complex greeting of a short song or chant. Every day five students shared something with the class. Each student was given about two minutes to talk about anything they wish. Each student was assigned a specific day to share and every student shared once a week. The students brought in a small object to share, or simply talked about something, such as their soccer game, party, etc. Other students asked the student sharing questions. Five students were allowed to ask questions. The group activity included every person in the classroom. Some group activities included singing a song, echo reading a poem, playing a short game, making a class decision, and solving a problem. The group activity lasted about five minutes. News and announcements was a daily letter. This letter informed the students of the day's events. The letter also had an academic component to it. Mistakes were purposely made in each letter, such as missing punctuation, misspelled word, missing capital letter, date in wrong place, signature in wrong place, etc. The students read the letter aloud together. One student used a pointer to help the other students follow along. The students identified and corrected each mistakes. The morning meetings were introduced one component at a time over the course of one week. The morning meetings were teacher led for another week, and student led for the last three weeks. The students took turns choosing the greeting, group activity, and assisting with the news and announcements. The student had a list of about eight greetings and eight group activities to choose from. All students were familiar with each greeting and group

activity prior to the students taking over the morning meetings. Each student led their part of the sharing once a week, including choosing friends who had questions.

Sources of Data

Three types of data sources will be used throughout this study. Prior to any data collection, a letter was distributed to participating student's parents and/or guardians. This letter explained the study and request permission for their child's participation in the study.

The first type of data collection was a sociogram involving all of the participants. As defined as the American Heritage dictionary, a sociogram is "a sociometric chart plotting the structure of interpersonal relations in a group of situations." Each student was individually asked which three of their classmates they would want to play with at recess. The names were recorded and the student researcher created a sociogram. This was done prior to the beginning of the study and after the study was complete. The student researchers used the sociogram as a type of data.

The second type of data collection was small group discussion. Six students were selected to meet for twenty minutes periodically throughout the study. The teacher asked questions and open the floor for discussion. Other questions were asked based on the responses to questions. These small group discussions were audio recorded.

The third type of data collection was the teacher researcher journal. In this journal, the teacher recorded her thoughts, questions, observations and feelings throughout the study in reaction to the student's words and actions.

Data Analysis

The sociograms, small group discussions, and the teacher research journal were used to draw conclusions regarding how morning meetings create a community in the classroom. The data was analyzed by comparing the sociograms, using direct quotes from small group discussion, and written observations from the teacher researcher. All of the information was organized and analyzed for evidence that morning meeting helped to create a community in the classroom.

What's Next

The next chapter outlines the various sources of data while providing an analysis and interpretation of the data. Chapter four also includes a summary of the findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

Findings of the Study

Introduction

Chapter Four discusses the findings of the study from the data collected. This chapter describes and draws conclusions on the data resources including two sociograms, focus group discussions, and my teacher research journal. The data collected examines the social patterns of the students, the opinions of a small group of students as well as the observations of the teacher researcher. The data presented addresses the question of the study: *How does a morning meeting create a community in the classroom? What are the most effective activities in a morning meeting? How do students respond to daily morning meetings?*

Research Findings

Sociograms

As previously stated, a sociogram was created prior to the beginning of the morning meetings and another was created following the conclusion of the morning meetings. Each student was individually called over to the back table. Each student was asked to name three classmates who they would pick to play with at recess on the playground. The students were asked to honestly answer the question without worrying what others may think. It was stressed that no one would know who they picked and that there is no right or wrong answer. I recorded each student's initials and the initials of the three students they choose. The exact question was asked to every student prior to the beginning of the morning meetings and at the conclusion of the morning meetings to

prevent any discrepancies. The number of times each student was selected was tallied and used to create a sociogram in order to compare the initial sociogram with the final sociogram.

The initial sociogram was created prior to the start of the daily morning meetings. When the sociogram was analyzed, interesting information was found in relation to the students who have either IEPs or 504 plans and students who have consistent behavior problems. Fifteen of the twenty students were chosen by at least one classmate. Therefore, five students were not chosen by any of their classmates. Of the five students not chosen, three of them have either an IEP or 504 plan. The other two students constantly exhibit inappropriate behaviors in the classroom. These behaviors included calling out, getting out of their seat, and arguing with other classmates. There were two students who were only selected one time each by a classmate. One of these students has an IEP. The other student was recently new to the classroom, but not the school. Although this classroom is an inclusion classroom, not all of the student appear to be included socially in the room.

When the initial sociogram was analyzed, it also showed a social pattern with the students who are in the gifted and talented program. The largest number of times a student was selected was six times. There was only one student who was selected six times. This student is in the gifted and talented program. Four of the five students in the gifted and talented program were selected at least four times by their classmates. The student in the program, who was not selected at least four times, was the new student in the classroom. When comparing the students selected the largest number of times with the students who were selected the least number of times, there is a difference in

academic level. The students with the highest academic level, were selected the highest number of times as compared to the students with the lowest academic level were selected the least number of times or not at all. The analysis of the initial sociogram shows that the classroom does not appear to be a community.

When comparing the two sociograms, a social change in the classroom can be seen. After the implementation of the morning meetings, only one student was not chosen as compared to five in the first sociogram. The one student not chosen does have an IEP. The other students who have either an IEP or 504 plan were chosen by one or two classmates. The students with the consistent behavior problems were also chosen by one or two classmates. The new student was chosen by three classmates. When comparing the two sociograms, the students who did not appear to be included socially in the classroom were beginning to be included. This inclusion could also be seen in the classroom. For example, the students can earn mega skills throughout the school day for various reasons and when a student has earned ten mega skills, he or she can trade those mega skills in for a reward. A lot of students choose playing a board game with a friend. Some of the students' choice of friend began to change after the implementation of the morning meeting. Anna is one of the students who was not chosen by a classmate prior to the implementation of the morning meetings. Here is a vignette showing her inclusion in the classroom:

Kaitlin walked up to Mrs. Smith and asked, "Can I trade my ten mega skills in for a board game with a friend?" "Sure," replied Mrs. Smith. "Go ahead and pick one off the shelf and find a friend to play with." Kaitlin walked over to the shelf and chose Candyland. With the game in her arms, she walked over to Anna and asked her if she

wanted to play. With a big smile on her face, Anna excitedly replied, "Yes!" and the two girls played Candyland together.

The sociogram and classroom observation both show that the students who were not socially included prior to the beginning of the morning meetings, are now being included. This may have been a result of the daily morning meetings.

When comparing the initial and final sociograms, the students who are in the gifted and talents program were still chosen the most. But the largest number of times a student was chosen by his/her classmates decreased from six to five. In the initial sociogram, one student was chosen the largest number of times, but in the final sociogram three students were chosen the largest number of times. This could be a result of a change in friendships. The students may have made more friends as a result of the morning meetings and therefore, changed their response and more classmates became the most chosen instead of just one student. Also, in the first sociogram, twelve students were chosen by at least four classmates. This number decreased to eight following the implementation of the morning meetings. The number of times a student was chosen became more spread out because some of the classmates who were not chosen at all or chosen one or two times, were chosen more following the implementation of the morning meetings. As a result, the number of times the more popular students were chosen decreased. This proves that the students were picking different classmates and more classmates were being included in the friendships within the classroom. The morning meeting may have enabled the students to make more friends and become more comfortable with their classmates. Because more of the classmates were chosen the

second time the students were asked the question, it appears that the students have made more friendships in the classroom.

When comparing the first and second list of friends who each student chose, it shows that the students are making new friend in the classroom. Nineteen of the twenty students chose at least one new friend. Ten students chose at least two new friends. Three students chose three new friends. There was only one student who picked all three of the same friends. This shows that the students have different friends in the class. It also appears that the students are making new friends and that many of them changed their choice of friends. The morning meeting may have encouraged the students to step outside their group of friends and make new ones.

The creation of the two sociograms before and after the implementation of the morning meeting found important data to be analyzed. The information gathered from the sociograms showed a positive impact on the relationships of the students in the first grade inclusion classroom after the use of the daily morning meetings.

Focus Group Discussions

Throughout the implementation of the daily morning meetings, a focus group of six students met several times for about twenty minutes each time. The small group discussion took place towards the end of the day in an empty classroom across the hall. The students sat in chairs and formed a circle so that everyone could see each other. The discussions were audio recorded. All of the students who participated in the focus group discussions had written permission from their parents or guardians to participate in the group and to be audio recorded. The students were told that only I would listen to the tape. The students were also told that their discussions were taped so that I would

remember what everyone had said. When the discussions were transcribed, the students initial were given pseudonyms. During our focus group discussions, many enlightening statements were made by the students.

The teacher asked the students several questions during the focus group discussions. Each student was given plenty of time to respond to each question. During the first discussion, the students and teacher discussed a community and what they think a community is. The students were asked if they thought our classroom was a community. Three of the students responded no. Some of their responses were:

Kaite: People always tell people what to do and think they can do it just because they want to tell you what to do. And because they just want to be mean and don't have no friends.

Edward: Because other people tell people what to do and because they want to get other people in trouble. And we don't usually work together. And that's part of team work.

These students both felt that people in their class told others what to do for negative reasons. Edward also felt that they did not work together and pointed out that working together was a part of team work. One of the students, Cathy, responded kinda when asked if she thought our class was a community.

Cathy: Because some people work together.

During our last focus group meeting, I asked the students again if they thought our class was a community. All of the students responded yes. Some of the students responses were:

Cathy: People work together. I just tell them the answers sometimes when we are partnered up so they know that answer and learn from me because we learn from each other. That's way I think we are a community.

Nora: Because in my group they tell me how to do something I don't know how to do.

Edward: Because we help each other and we work as a team. Sometimes we work for a teamwork mega skill.

The students' responses the first time they were asked if their class was a community shows that not all of the students were sure that their class was a community. Some of the students felt that other students were bossy, mean, and do not work together. At the end of the implementation of the morning meeting, the student's responses had changed. They felt that they did work together and help one another. This may have been a result of the morning meetings and the activities that required the students to practice working together.

During one of our focus group meetings, the students were asked if they thought the morning meetings helped the classroom become more of a community. All of the students responded yes. The students were then asked how the morning meetings helped create a community. Some of the students felt that the greeting part of the morning meeting helped us become a community. Their responses were:

Katie: Because every day we get to say hello to people and then that make you nice and then that makes you lots of friends. And then you get to hug people and shake peoples hands and give them high fives.

Nora: Everyone said hi and then you give them a hug.

Edward's response is similar to Katie and Nora's. He talks about the specific greetings that we have done. His response was:

Edward: Number one because you shook hands and did the elbow rock and butterfly. It taught us how to use teamwork. And whenever we play snowball toss we crumble it up and our names are on it before we crumble it up. And then we throw it in the middle and then we take it and then we start hugging, high fiving, and doing handshake. And that teaches us a lot about each other.

The elbow rock required the students to link elbows and shake them. The butterfly required two students to each use one of their hands to make the butterfly symbol in sign language. Both greetings required the students to communicate and work together to successfully complete the greeting.

Therefore, some of the students felt that the greeting part of the morning meeting helped the students feel like a community. The students thought that saying hello and giving a hug or high five or shaking their hand helped the students feel like a community. The greeting may have helped the students feel comfortable and welcomed and loved by the other students in the class. One student felt that the greetings, which required team work, helped the students create a community. These greeting required the students to work together, and therefore, they accomplished something by working with someone in their class. The greeting was one part of the morning meeting that helped the students create a community in the classroom.

Other students thought that the sharing part of the morning meeting helped the become a community. Their responses were:

Cathy: Because like the sharing part has helped a lot because they listen to you and pay attention.

Edward: Sharing is a good thing. You know why? Because you can tell more about yourself to other people so they can learn from you and because you can learn more about them.

These students felt that the sharing part of the morning meeting helped to create a community. The sharing allowed the students to take the spot light for a few minutes while the other students listened to them. Cathy indicated that she thinks this helped create a community. The sharing may have made the students feel special and that their classmates cared about them and in return feeling as though they belong to a community. Edward indicated that he felt that you can tell others about yourself and learn more about others. The sharing part allowed the students to share something special to them. This made the student sharing feel special and important and also the classmates listening learned something about their classmate. This may have enabled the students to feel closer to one another and begin to build a community. Sharing is another way that morning meetings have helped to form a community in the classroom.

One student felt that the new behaviors learned during the morning meetings helped the classroom become a community. His response was:

Vinny: It teaches people new manners and to be respectful to each other.

These new behaviors may have made the classroom a friendlier and more welcoming place to be. The students may have felt more comfortable around their peers with the change in behavior towards each other. The learning of new positive behaviors is another way that morning meetings have helped to form a community in the classroom.

The greeting, sharing, and learned positive behaviors are all parts of the morning meetings that have helped create a community in the classroom, as indicated by the students. Edwards and Mullis (2003) stated that classroom meetings, especially when done on a daily basis, build a sense of belonging, caring, and trust among the students. The parts of the meeting, as indicated by the students, have helped the student feel this way and therefore, a community is being formed among the students.

During the focus group meetings, the students were asked what they thought of the morning meeting. All of the students responded that they enjoyed the meeting. Some of the students liked the morning meeting because of the group activity time. Some of the responses were:

Cathy: I really like it because I get to sit and play games with my friends.

Katie: You get to play fun games.

Mike: It lets us play games such as Simon Says.

These students really enjoyed the game part of the morning meeting. Other students liked the morning meeting because of the sharing time. Their responses were:

Cathy: You listen to what they say about their toys and stuff.

Edward: I like to share with my friends and I have lots of fun asking questions about them.

These students liked the sharing part of the morning meeting. One student enjoyed the news and announcement part of the morning meeting. His response was:

Edward: I like to do the news and announcements because you get to call people up or do it yourself. I like the part when you call people up because it is fun.

Edward enjoyed going up and making the corrections to the letter and also being in charge of calling others up to make the corrections during the news and announcement part of the morning meeting. One student liked that he was able to sit next to new friends. He enjoyed sitting next to different people and making new friends during morning meeting. All of the students liked the morning meeting, but for different reasons. The students liked the morning meeting for the fun group activities, sharing, and sitting next to new friends.

Through the analysis of the focus group discussions, several common themes could be found. One of the themes in the students' responses was giving hugs during the greeting part of the morning meeting. Three of the students said that the greeting help the class become more of a community and talked about hugging friends. This could also be observed in the classroom. In the beginning, only some students gave hugs. When a student hugged another, big smiles spread across everyone's face and the students said aww. As time went on more of the students were giving hugs to other students. Almost all of the students gave hugs. The hugging may have allowed the students to feel accepted and closer to their classmates and therefore, building a community in the classroom.

Another common theme in the students' responses was teamwork or working together. When the students were asked why they did not think the class was a community, some of the students talked about not working together. During the last focus group discussion, all of the students agreed that the class was a community. Some of the students talked about working together. One students discussed the different greetings that taught teamwork. Teaching students how to work together helps the

students create a community in the classroom. When the students work together, there is not conflict in the classroom and therefore, a community is being built.

Another common theme was having fun with friends. When the students were asked what they thought of the morning meetings, some of the students talked about sitting next to a new friend and playing games with friends. The students seemed to enjoy being able to spend time with their classmates. The morning meeting allowed the students to spend time together that was not academic or in their seats. The students sat next to different students, greeted different students, and participated in group activities with others. Having the structured activities and time with classmates may have helped the students form a community.

The focus group discussions found important data to be analyzed. The information gathered from the focus group discussions showed a positive impact on the students. The students seemed to have learned about each other and from each other during the morning meetings. The students also seemed to become more comfortable with one another. This contributed to the building of a community in the classroom.

Teacher Research Journal and Observations

The last source of data to analyze is the teacher research journal written from September 9, 2007 to May 10th, 2008. Various observations were made during the daily classroom meetings and also throughout the school day.

During the first week of the morning meeting, I introduced the students to each part of the morning meeting. On the first day, I introduced the greeting. I was surprised with the reaction of the students. Each student said good morning to the person next to them and passed a ball. A lot of the students loved it. They were all smiling. I asked

them how they felt and their responses were surprised, happy, good, and glad. It was exciting to see what a difference the simple greeting had made the first day. The students were happy to have been greeted by another student. The greeting proved to be an essential part of the morning meeting and building a community from the first day.

The students' behavior during the morning meeting changed. In the beginning, the students were talking and not paying attention. I had to continuously remind them how to behave. As time continued the students behavior began to change. This change can be seen in my journal entry April 9, 2008. It says:

The students' behavior is improving so much! Today the students waited while others spoke. I did not have to remind them to wait their turn. During the question part of the sharing, the students raised their hands and waited to be called on. No one called out a question or answer. The questions that were asked were great! For the first time, there were no repeats. I think the students are starting to listen to each other. I couldn't be more excited!

The behavior in the classroom also began to improve. Before beginning the morning meetings, the students argued continuously whenever they worked together, especially during their morning centers. The students always complained that someone was cheating, students showed poor sportsmanship toward each other, or someone would walk away from a game if they lost crying. The behavior began to improve. My journal entry from April 15, 2008 illustrates this change. It says:

Today during a game of limbo at the end of the day, the students showed good sportsmanship. The students were cheering each other on and encouraging each other. When someone was eliminated, the other students would clap for them.

One little girl never makes it too far in the game, but today she did. When she did get out, one of the boys came up to her and told her that she did a great job! It was awesome to see!

My cooperating teachers noticed a difference in the children's behavior after the beginning of the morning meetings. This change was seen a lot when the students played games or worked together. My cooperating teachers talked about how the students are more encouraging towards each other, especially when someone loses. They also noticed that the students are also not as angry when they lose. There is a lot more laughter during the games and much less conflicts.

There were still some problems that occurred in the classroom among the students. Some of the students were saying mean things towards each other. During one of the morning meetings, one student hit another student and that student hit back. There were still some problems in the classroom, but these problems had decreased since the start of the morning meetings.

The morning meeting appears to have had a positive impact on the student's behavior. Even though some problems remain, the improved behavior has outweighed these problems. The morning meeting taught the students how to work together cooperatively and therefore, lessened the problems in the classroom making it more of a community atmosphere.

During the implementation of the morning meetings, the students' confidence grew greatly. At the beginning, the students were apprehensive about taking control during the meeting. A student would pick the greeting that they wanted to do, but was shy about telling his/her classmates. This changed as time went on. The students really

started to take control about four weeks into the morning meetings. This included the students sharing. I encouraged the students who were sharing to tell us when they were done and ready for questions. One day it just happened. My journal entry from April 17, 2008 talks about this. It says:

For the past couple of weeks I have really been encouraging the students who are sharing to take control and let us know when they are done and ready for questions, but no one has been doing so. Today it finally caught on. Edward was sharing and told us when he was done and ready for questions. The students seemed to take notice and the other three students sharing today did the same thing. It was great to see the students taking control!

By the end of the six weeks, the students were running the morning meetings without much assistance from me. It was great to see these six and seven year old students taking control. They loved every minute of it and so did I. I was able to sit back and be apart of the meeting without running it. You could see their confidence grow. You could also see a difference in how they treated one another. The students were kinder and more patient with one another. The morning meeting allowed the students to take control. This control led to learning how to work with each other and helping those who needed it.

The students showed a sense of responsibility when it came to the morning meetings. Not once did any of the students forget to bring something in to share. If a student did not have an object to share, the student had a story ready. As a part of the sharing, the students had to put what they were sharing on my desk when they came in. Only one student forgot, I told her that she could not share the object because she forgot.

She took it very well and talked about something instead. These students took their responsibility seriously. For the last week of the morning meetings, I asked the students to interview an adult in their family, and I gave the students questions that I wanted them to ask. The students were to share this interview during the sharing part of the morning meeting. Every student returned the interview and was prepared to share. If the students came to a part where they were stuck, other classmates started to help them before I had a chance to. The help was usually taken without an argument. I was happy that the students all brought in the interview and even happier when they were prepared to share and began helping each other. The morning meeting encouraged the students to take responsibility.

The morning meeting appeared to benefit the students greatly. It helped improve the behavior of the students. The students were nicer to each other and learned to work together. The students gained self-confidence and this showed in their control of the morning meetings. The student also learned to be responsible. The students completed assignments and took responsibility during the morning meetings. The morning meetings benefited the students greatly in different ways. These benefits helped the students build a community.

Summary of Findings

Altogether, a variety of data sources were used to analyze and discover findings for the study. Through the use of sociograms, focus group discussions, and teacher research journal, it allowed evidence of a community in the classroom and a positive impact on the students.

How does a morning meeting create a community

The morning meetings helped to create a community several ways. The various activities and greetings that were done during the morning meetings taught the students how to work together and allowed the students to get to know each other better. The students' behavior improved, and the students were kinder and more caring towards their classmates following the implementation of the morning meetings. The students were given the opportunity to take charge of the morning meetings, and they were given responsibility. This boosted the students' self- confidence. This boost in self- confidence helped to create a community in the classroom because the students felt better about themselves, and therefore treated their classmates better. The students were kinder and more patient with each other. Overall, the morning meeting enabled the students to become a community because it taught them how to work together, allowed the students to get to know each other, and gave the students a boost in confidence, which improved the climate of the classroom.

What are the most effective activities in a morning meeting

The morning meetings as a whole were effective. The students sat next to different friends every day. This allowed the students the opportunity to get to know each other better. The morning meetings also allowed all of the students to spend time together. The students enjoyed each others company. The greeting is one part of the morning meeting that was effective, especially the greetings that required the students to work together. These greetings taught the students the value of teamwork. A lot of the students hugged one another during the greeting. This helped the students feel closer to each other. The sharing part of the morning meeting was also effective. The sharing allowed the students to have a voice. It also enabled the students to get to know each

other better. Overall, the morning meetings was effective, especially the greeting and the sharing part of the meetings.

How do the students respond to the morning meetings

The students responded well to the morning meetings. A lot of the students enjoyed the morning meetings and looked forward to the meetings. The students in the focus group said that the morning meetings helped to create a community in the classroom. The sociograms and observations showed that the students began to include others socially in the classroom. There was also an improvement in behavior. The students argued less and were encouraging to each other. A boost in self- confidence was also observed. The students took control of the morning meetings with little or no assistance from me. Overall, the students responded positively to the morning meetings, which could be seen in the students' actions and words.

Overall, the morning meetings had a positive impact on the students. The students began to build a community in the classroom, which included all of the students. The students also benefited greatly from the meetings. Their behavior and actions towards each other improved, which created a friendlier climate in the classroom. This positive impact will continue to help the students in the future, because it taught them how to work with others and how to treat others, it taught the students responsibility, and it gave the students the self- confidence, which will help them do anything they put their minds to.

What's Next

The final chapter discusses the final findings of the study. It also discusses the limitations of the study and provides suggestions for future studies on morning meetings.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusions and Implications

Introduction

The results of the study support that morning meetings create a community in the classroom and have a positive effect on the students. When the students were given the opportunity to take responsibility and control, they flourished. Their self- confidence improved along with their behavior. The students began to care about one another and learned to work together. A community was forming in the classroom.

What I Learned

As stated earlier, many teachers use classroom meetings as a time to build a community. Edward and Mullis (1999) stated that these meetings, especially when done on a daily basis, build a sense of belonging, caring, and trust among the students. It was observed that the students were forming a community in the classroom after the implementation of the morning meetings. The sociogram shows that the students, who were not included in the classroom socially, were included following the implementation of the morning meetings. A caring environment was observed in the classroom. Many of the students hugged each other during the greeting, some students encouraged each other during games, and the students learned to work together. The morning meeting appeared to have created a community in the classroom and helped the students feel as though they belong and cared about each other.

As stated previously, the John B. Murphy Elementary School in Chicago implemented daily morning meetings throughout the entire school. As a result, the school became a more caring environment, behavior improved, and students developed

more sophisticated social skills (Horsch et al., 1999). This was also observed in the first grade classroom at the Overwood Elementary School. Following the implementation of the morning meetings, the student's behavior improved in the morning meetings and in the classroom. The students were more caring toward each other, especially when working together or playing a game. More laughter and encouragement was observed by myself and my cooperating teachers. The morning meetings had a positive effect on the students' behavior toward each other and created a caring environment.

As stated earlier, classroom meetings encouraged students to be risk-takers and take leadership roles (Horsch et al., 1999). All of the students were given the opportunity to take leadership roles in the morning meeting. At first the students were hesitant in taking control of the meetings, but that changed and by the end of the study the students had complete control of the meetings. The morning meeting enabled the students to take a leadership role in the meetings, and as a result, the students' self- confidence grew.

Limitations of the Study

Although the study showed a positive impact on the students and their classroom, there were several limitations in this study. This study took place in a small community in Southern New Jersey. The study was limited to one first grade classroom in one school. This put a limitation on the study because it only covered one class in one grade level. A larger sample in all of the first grade classes and across the grade levels would allow the research to see how morning meetings create a community in a larger variety of classes and grades. Another limitation was in the lack of support from my cooperating teachers. The cooperating teachers did not always foster a community in the classroom. The cooperating teachers also used morning meeting time as a time to pull the students

for make up work or took away the morning meeting as a punishment. This put a limitation on the study because not all of the students were always able to participate in the study. Another limitation for this study was finding time for the morning meetings. On Wednesdays, the occupational therapist came in the classroom for whole class occupational therapy. We could not have our meetings on those days. Also half days or days with an assembly, the morning meeting was either eliminated or moved. This put a limitation on the study, because the meeting could not always be a daily meeting. Also when the morning meeting was moved, some students could not participate in the morning meeting because they were not in the room during that time.

Implications of the Research

As previously mentioned, research has shown that morning meetings can be used to create a community in the classroom. The sociograms and observations indicate the inclusion of the students socially in the classroom. The morning meeting also had other positive effects on the students, which as a result helped to build a community among the students. The students in the focus group and observations indicated that different greetings and activities helped to teach the students how to work together and allowed the students to get to know each other. The students also indicated that the greetings and hugs helped the students to feel closer to each other. The sharing enabled the students to get to know each other better and gave each student a voice. During the morning meetings, the students sat next to different classmates. This also helped the students get to know each other and feel more comfortable with each other. The students were encouraged to take control during the morning meetings. It was observed that this control led to a boost in many of the students' self- confidence. The boost in self-

confidence has a positive effect on students' behaviors, especially in their words and actions towards each other. Less arguing was observed. The students were kinder and more caring towards each other, and more laughter was heard in the classroom. The students in the focus group and observations indicated that the students enjoyed spending time with each other during the morning meetings. The students enjoyed each others company and had a good time together. Overall, the morning meetings had a positive impact on the students and the classroom. This positive impact made the classroom a friendlier place to be. It also will continue to affect the students in the future, because it taught them how to work together, and how to treat others. The morning meetings gave students' self- confidence, which will help the students believe in themselves and take risks.

Suggestions for Future Research

More research needs to be continued to show how morning meetings create a community in the classroom. The studies need to be expanded to the entire school year to see its growth and impact on the students. I would also be interested to see the effects of morning meetings in a higher elementary classroom. It would be interesting to compare lower and higher elementary classrooms to see if there is a difference in how the community is created. Furthermore, I would be interested to see if the morning meetings had an effect on students' grades and testing scores. I believe that the boost in self- confidence and the feeling of acceptance and comfort would have a positive effect on the students academically.

Closing Thoughts

By researching how daily morning meetings create a community in the classroom, I learned the importance of fostering a community. I will always have morning meetings as a part of my daily routine in the classroom. As the research indicated, the students included each other socially in the classroom. The students learned more about each other by sitting next to different classmates, by participating in different activities together, and by listening to each other talk. The students' behavior changed, especially in relation to each other. The students were friendlier, more caring, and more willing to help each other. There was more laughter in the classroom. The morning meeting created more friendships among the students. The students also learned more about themselves. The morning meetings gave the students a voice during the sharing part and also when given the opportunity to take control. The students' self-confidence grew as a result of this student voice. The morning meetings had so many positive effects on the classroom. Most importantly, the morning meeting allowed acceptance and understanding, which led to much great things in the classroom. This makes the morning meeting a vital part of the classroom.

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