

**Team Final Report on Teacher and Student Learning at Frazer School
with Christine Walsh & Ritu Radhakrishnan**

EDU 525 - Cultivating Learning Communities through Mindful Language and Literacy

Teacher(s): Melissa Buonvecchio

Please update us on any changes you made to your team action plan:

I added restorative circles to my action plan as a way of adding to the student feeling validated, respected, supported, comfortable, and heard in the classroom. See the reflection below as to why I added restorative circles to my action plan.

Analysis of Data on Teacher Learning: We examined our reflections and found the following:

In my reflections I noticed that in January when I had planned on starting my action plan with the class my regular education co-teacher went out on maternity leave and decided to take the rest of the school year off. I didn't think that this was going to be an issue but after having a few substitutes for 2 weeks I started noticing more referrals written in my class as well as in the students special area classes. I also noticed that the students were more unsettled at times and there was an increase in bullying. Therefore, I could tell that the kids were having a difficult time adjusting to the new faces in our room and I had to play both roles. It put a lot more stress on me and I was very overwhelmed and struggled with not having my partner around. I also had noticed in my journal writings that I would write a lot about how 3 students who were making strides started slipping and how could I reach them? Even after we had a consistent long term sub our classroom was never the same dynamics wise. On top of me struggling to get control of the class and make use I reach every student we had an addition of 2 new students, who were brothers. They were added to our classroom the first week of March. Having these two new students caused more behavior problems and bullying in our classroom. So with all of this in mind I decided to add on restorative circle time once a week using one of our schools behavior specialists. She was able to discuss friendships, bullying, and similarities/differences of each student. She even would pull small groups just to get a better focus on individual students. This helped with my stress level as I now felt supported and could lean on her.

Analysis of Data on Student Learning: We examined _____ and found the following:

My action plan called for the students to bring in "share bags" on their designated day. During this month I noticed the students were really excited to share their things from home and explain why they brought the items in. At the time of each presentation I would examine the student presenting and then the students during the presentation. I noticed that the presenter most of the time was really excited to share. I also documented that a couple of times some of the shy students in our class were interested in the objects and asked questions. The students would generate interest in each others objects and have something to talk about. This brought on a sense of being validated and respected. I also examined the number of referrals/observation notes written during the month of January-April. During the month of January-February I noticed a spike in 4 students referrals/observation notes. I found that most of the problems had occurred in their special (PE, Library, Art, Music) and during enrichment (RedHouse Theatre). Then there were referrals/observation notes written right after each of these times. They had to do with the problem extending into the classroom. I made sure to read books about bullying and respect. I included the help of our schools behavior specialist and added the restorative circles to help clear up the problems. I noticed during March-April the amount of referrals/observation notes for 3 of the students decreased by about 60-50%. The other student has had an increase in referrals/observation notes.

Please update us on any changes you made to your team action plan:

- **Original Plan:** We implemented a mindfulness in music exercise daily at the beginning of our second grade group in order to clear their minds and focus on the reading lesson. The students completed a response for how they are feeling after the music.
- **Change:** We had to change the response form several times due to student frustration with the difficulty of the task. In the beginning of the project, the results were inconclusive for various reasons. Some students did not attempt to write how they were feeling, some were unable to read the options and some circled conflicting choices. Therefore, we changed the form to a more student friendly template with students drawing a picture (with the option to write) or circling a facial expression for how they were feeling before and after listening to the music.

Analysis of Data on Teacher Learning: We examined our reflections and found the following

We chose to work with this particular group of students because many of the students were often agitated or upset when entering our classroom after an incident in their own homeroom class prior to our reading group. When introducing this exercise we assumed that when given the opportunity to do so, the students would have the ability to monitor their own feelings when the music was playing. However, we found the students were not able to do this on their own and it required deliberate teaching through think alouds and modeling. We learned that mindfulness activities, just like any academic activity, requires time spent on teaching, modeling, and practicing before an exercise is successful. Not only did this improve their behavior but also the quality of their learning. We hope the students will be able to continue these mindfulness activities not only in just our class but also in their homeroom class and at home.

- After going to the mindfulness classes and reading many articles on mindfulness we identified how important it is to be mindful ourselves in order to build a healthy classroom community. We found that being mindful ourselves allowed us to teach these strategies to the students in order to promote a positive classroom environment. When we started this project we were anticipating the music would help the students, however, we did not realize this project would also benefit us. We found the mindfulness exercises beneficial because it allowed us a few minutes per day to relax and we found ourselves more calm, which in turn helped the students. This helped to promote a more positive environment in our classroom and helped us build positive relationships with ourselves and the students. Before the mindfulness exercise this group was the most challenging group, however, now it is the group we look forward to the most.
- Before this project we spent a lot of instructional time with this group to address negative behaviors. All of the students were struggling readers who were making slow progress and many had difficulty focusing on a literacy task. After the project, we are spending less time on re-direction and more time on instruction. All of the students have made significant progress and are able to focus on a task during our reading group. We believe the students are able to focus on the lesson because they are calm after the exercise. Based on the data, the students' academic achievement has increased significantly in the past four months since we started this project. Overall, due to the mindfulness in music activity every day, the students were more engaged in the lessons and made significant academic progress.

Analysis of Data on Student Learning:

- We examined how students' feelings changed after listening to music and how this affected their learning and behavior during our small reading group. Our group consists of 12 students from three different homerooms. All of the students are working at least one grade below level. We see this group daily for 40 minutes per day.

Feelings:

Happy → Happy: 19/33 – 57%

Sad → Happy: 3/33 – 9%

Angry → Happy: 6/33 – 18%

Angry → Sad: 1/33 – 3%

Angry → Angry: 4/33 – 12%

We discovered that 27% of the students' feelings changed from a negative feeling (sad or angry) to a positive feeling (happy). We noticed that no students reported a negative change after listening to the music.

Written Response Observation:

Out of the 60 reflections that were completed, students attempted to write about their feelings 12 times and drew a picture to describe their feelings 48 times. Through our observations we noticed that students had difficulty spelling words and got easily frustrated with the form. Even though the students were relaxed and calm after the music they became agitated when completing the response form. Very often this escalated student behavior during the reading lesson.

Behavior:

January → February: 70 individual re-directions

March → April: 39 individual re-directions

We kept data on student behavior every day for four months. This data included both positive and negative behaviors. Overall, the number of re-directions given during a 40 minute lesson decreased significantly from 70 to 39. The only variable that was changed was the mindfulness in music exercise. We believe the number of re-directions decreased due to this daily activity.

Academics:

January: 53% of students mastered the assessment

April: 78% of the students mastered the assessment

Our baseline assessment in January was to determine if students knew letter sounds, names of letters and letter formation. At that time only 53% of the students mastered the assessment. At that time we began the mindfulness with music exercise daily. When we assessed the student in February 100% of the students mastered letter sounds, letter names and letter formation. We continued our current reading program and challenged the students with reading and writing words and sentences. When we assessed the students in April on their ability to read and write sounds, digraphs, words, sight words and sentences 78% of the students mastered the assessment. We attribute the academic success of this group to the mindfulness with music activity. Due to the fact that the students were given an opportunity to calm themselves down with the mindfulness in music activity, their behaviors improved which led to a stronger focus on academics.

Student Responses

We interviewed the students to find out how they felt about the mindfulness project. The following is a list of the responses students gave about how they felt about listening to the music daily:

“When I was down in my classroom I was mad about lunch. When the music played I felt calm and ready to learn.”

“The music goes in your body and your body relaxes.”

“I don't like to come up here but when I do come up the music calms me down.”

“When I put my head down, I think of something happy and take deep breaths. This helps me.”

Based on this interview we determined that the students are not only aware of the purpose of the music but also how they can use this exercise during other times of the day.

Teacher(s): Caroline Mackessy and Mary Pat Keegan

Please update us on any changes you made to your team action plan:

We did not incorporate any yoga this year. We were hoping to, but we will try again next year to incorporate yoga into our plan.

Analysis of Data on Teacher Learning: We examined our reflections & found the following:

Mary Pat Keegan: I really enjoyed doing this project with Caroline. We work well as a team and this project just helped to reinforce our ability to work together to create a positive environment for which our students can grow and prosper. We decided to read the same articles during the same weeks in order to give us a chance to share our reflections on what we read. Using the MindUp Curriculum was a great idea. There were many things for us to pick from that introduced and reinforced what we wanted the students to learn and practice. I would like to create more visuals that go along with the lessons over the summer. I think that some anchor charts and pictures would help support the learning even more. Each lesson had a “real world connection”. Pictures are really needed to help support this part. Usually children this age aren’t really looking at what they could do in the future, but this section helps to give them some ideas beyond what they see here at school and at home. The literature in this book was great when you could find one of the recommended books. There were several books that our library didn’t have and some that could be borrowed from other district libraries. I am looking forward to getting started earlier next school year on this curriculum, along with incorporating yoga into the practice.

Caroline Mackessy: Looking back to when we started incorporating mindfulness into the classroom I noticed how the impact was two-fold. The students were calmed and my own daily stress levels were reduced. I realized that a louder stressful voice on my end only heightened the anxiety of the students. This awareness helped me present myself to the students in a calmer way. I enjoyed learning to combine the deep belly breathing and the resonance bell as a means to reduce stress. I believe that after several sessions this technique helped guard me against the possible burn out that teachers experience during the course of the school year. In addition, Ms. Keegan and I would spend lunchtime to discuss readings and how we can use some techniques in the classroom and for ourselves personally. This was motivating to me to explore mindfulness further. I look forward

Analysis of Data on Student Learning: We examined our reflections/data and found the following:

We found that our students **loved** learning about the brain. They were able to retain much of the information about the brain that we presented. It really helped that it was presented in several modalities (they heard it, they saw it pictorially, and they made it using gestures). It was also presented over the course of the year and was often reviewed. They were also able to see a “brain” at the MOST in April on a class field trip. They were very excited to tell adults what they knew about the brain while we were there.

The MindUp Curriculum has many ideas that support mindful learning. The students were able to be actively involved in the learning. There was a cute song that we learned towards the beginning called “My Brain is So Very Important to Me”. Later we explored our 5 senses by focusing on Mindful smelling, mindful seeing, mindful listening, mindful tasting. During the Mindful Tasting we had the students create a small mini-booklet: This food looks _____. This food smells _____. This food tastes _____. We read the book Gregory, the Terrible Eater . We created “A Crunchy Spinner” to help them with vocabulary reinforced “taste” vocabulary. They were then able to use these words in writing pieces. They were more open to trying new things at snack time. We also heard them using this vocabulary during their playtime and the different learning centers.

The students really benefitted from the breathing exercises that we demonstrated and then practiced almost daily. They were able to calm themselves and focus on the next learning activity. One of our children really needed some extra time to practice these techniques one on one with an adult from our room when he became overwhelmed with the day. Pulling him aside and helping him through some deep breathing exercises really help.

We also introduced him to the relaxation ball (it reflexes in and out and reflects deep breathing).

Overall the students responded well to the activities and the stories that we shared with them. We noticed that our classroom as a whole was more aware of their surroundings and more attentive in their learning. We look forward to starting this at the beginning of our next school year.

Teacher(s): Martin Boatwright, Sherilyn Early, Crysten Howard

Please update us on any changes you made to your team action plan:

At the beginning of the class, we hoped to work with a small group of boys within our two classes that were really struggling with behavior, stemming from social/emotional traumas or difficulties within their home lives. We were required by our administration to create and meet with a SIG (student intervention group) based on students who were experiencing behavioral challenges, weekly on Tuesdays and Thursdays during PLC time (Professional Learning Community). Our plan was to target the group of boys we had who were leaving the classroom, or having explosive outbursts in the classroom. Unfortunately, our administration decided to change the schedule of our PLC times, and removed the SIG group. Because we were no longer designated that time to meet, we found it very difficult to pull those boys with the 3 teachers. After we created our action plan we started to meet with Professor Grimes from SU and her students who showed an interest in coming into our school to work with our students. We tweaked our plan to still have the SIG group with 2 of the SU football players with the support of one of the behavior specialists in our school at 8:30 on Thursdays, have an adult with 2 ladies from Professor Grimes' class work with us with assigned readings and discussions at 8:30 on Fridays, and then Grimes would come in the afternoon to work with the 2 classes in a larger session. The small boys group did not end up working out because the boys were never here at that time; either tardy that day or absent. Instead, we continued having the sessions in the afternoon with the larger classes, and had the sessions Friday mornings with the adult group.

Analysis of Data on Teacher Learning: We examined our reflections and found the following:

Crysten Howard- Taking this class this year has definitely impacted me as an individual but also as a teacher. I have tried to change the way that I respond to students when they are in a crisis or even throughout the normal frustrations that occur during the day, both inside the classroom, such as last minute changes in schedules, things being turned in quickly, or breaking up classrooms due to lack of substitute teachers. Whereas I used to be a teacher who would yell and be more punitive when students acted out, this class has helped me reflect on my actions to see that I can be more effective and caring to my students by staying calm and giving them time to deescalate instead of being punitive. This year I have formed some really amazing relationships with a few students that I think have really impacted those students in a positive way. I think they feel like they truly have a teacher they can depend on and find comfort in. I have a younger brother who has Asperger's who I do community habilitation work with, and I have used some of the strategies I have learned in class to help him express his emotions that have seemed to help him. This summer I plan on incorporating some mindfulness into the work with him which I think will really help with his communication. Finally, I have recently gone through some changes within my personal life, and reflecting on myself and how I manage the stress of it has allowed me to get through each day without feeling completely overwhelmed during a time it would be completely understandable to lose my mind. I really think that being more mindful of my own feelings helped me transition into

Martin Boatwright- After reflecting on the meaning of mindfulness and how mindfulness activities or literacy and language cultivate and support a learning community; I learned that there are three major factors that are needed for self-awareness and self-growth. They are; positive environment, consistency, and cooperation.

Creating a positive learning environment is a difficult task but once the students began to trust each other

they are more engaged and interested in doing mindfulness activities, such as; yoga, journal writing, and cooperative learning. Sharing and playing together is an essential part of creating a positive environment. I think this year class struggled with these aspects of development, therefore the class lacked cooperative learning and shared more about feelings and how to treat others.

Consistency allow students to have positive expectations and build confidence in the children's process of learning; at times students were relaxed and focused during activities after doing a mindfulness activity. Building consistency in the classroom students learn how to identify their feelings and use different strategies and activities to work through or even embrace their feelings (take ownership).

Cooperation is essential when working with students. After several weeks I noticed students working together cooperatively and learning to problem solve. I think one of the hardest thing for a first grader to do is express and explain their feelings to others, especially if they are angry. I think this year was a lesson of how working together can truly make a difference in mindful of our own feelings and the feelings of others.

Sherilyn Early - What I have learned as a teacher from the mindfulness readings and class activities were, I needed to be aware of my tone of voice and inflections when I spoke to disruptive students. My tone and delivery has a powerful impact on the student's responses. At the beginning of this school year I had 3 students that would be disruptive in the classroom. They would not stay in their seats, climbed on desks or ran out the room daily. It was very frustrating and took a toll on my patience. I noticed the more I responded in frustration with them, the more they reacted with negative behavior. Then we started using mindfulness yoga practices in the classrooms using "Cosmic Kids Yoga" on Youtube each day, and the activities with the SU students. As students learned how to breathe and focus on their behaviors and actions, I also notice more of my own reactions and responses to the disruptive behaviors. I notice that when I responded in a calm natural tone of voice without any adverse facial expressions, the students would be more receptive for positive redirections. My class is much calmer now. The disruptions have been less frequent (I now have only 1 student who will leave the classroom, but it doesn't happen every day now), and I am not exhausted at the end of each day.

Analysis of Data on Student Learning: We examined student behaviors (number of classroom explosions and running out of the classroom) and found the following:

At the beginning of the year both of our classrooms had boys displaying very aggressive, explosive behaviors inside and outside of the classroom, especially when given direct instructions or redirection. These boys left the classroom frequently, were verbally and physically aggressive towards students and staff, struggled with expressing their feelings and accepting consequences. At this time, 3 of the boys are so much more successful in the classroom. They are all on behavior plans and are rarely leaving the classroom. They are improving daily in their behavior. Their numbers of referrals have decreased and their overall happiness has improved drastically. In the beginning the boys were very angry, coming into school upset, sometimes running into the room and yelling, walking around with scrunched up faces all day. Now, the boys are handling consequences better and are problem solving with adult support. They are able to reflect more on their own feelings and the feelings of other's, specifically how their behaviors may be affecting those that are around them. They are more receptive to communicating how they are feeling and willing to accept feedback from adults about how to handle the situations better. At first when Professor Grimes came to our classroom with her students, the boys we were targeting to support had their guards up and didn't engage much, but after a few sessions with them the boys gradually started to join the group instead of sitting outside of the circles and actually started participating by asking and answering questions. Through the pictures we drew in class These students have started following directions better and are able to do more activities independently.

Please update us on any changes you made to your team action plan:

In the beginning of the lesson, students were supposed to be screened on their phonological awareness skills, however after beginning the lessons using the sounds to heighten awareness, it became clear that the students wanted to engage in a discussion about why the sounds made them feel a specific way and also were very interested in hearing from me why sounds made me feel the way I did. The activity became more about discussing our awareness about our feelings and how others may feel differently than us and that is okay. Sometimes it may take getting to know others on a deeper level in order to fully understand their views and opinions on things that are going on around them. Overall, we built upon our self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and decision-making. All of these areas were discussed in “The MindUp Curriculum” book for grades PK-2. Parts of each lesson were taken from this book and our awareness of self and others was discussed on a daily basis.

Analysis of Data on Teacher Learning: We examined our reflections and found the following:

In the large group classroom of at least 25 kids, the students rarely get a chance to express their feelings and emotions about lessons as well as basic things that are occurring within their lives at school and at home. It is important for each student to feel that they are heard and that their feelings matter, as well as others’ feelings. After reading the introduction section of the Mind Up Curriculum book, I realized how important individual attention to each student was and how I could attempt to make a difference in their mindfulness of self and others during small group time. I started each day by greeting each student individually with a high five or hug (their choice) and found that they really enjoyed this individualized attention. They wanted to greet each other in this same manner and found that they were beginning to speak to their friends on a deeper level than what had been seen before. They were beginning to ask specific questions of their peers, which was great to see!

The lessons were set up so that each day the students would listen to 5 different sounds and would first state how the sound made them feel (happy, sad, angry, excited, scared) and then draw a picture of what they thought the sound was. It was interesting to see the students interact with each other and immediately attempt to engage others in a conversation about the sound they listened to. For example, one of the first sounds we listened to was a dog barking. I explained to them that it made me happy at first because I love dogs, but then sad because my dog had died recently and I continue to miss her. Right away the students started to discuss how they felt about dogs and reasons why they felt a certain way. One student explained that dogs scared him, because he was once chased by a dog. Immediately his body began to react in a specific way (he looked more tense and uneasy) and he seemed like he wanted to avoid eye contact with others. Another student said they had a similar experience, whereas another student explained that they love puppies and has been asking for one at home. They all began to discuss their feelings about dogs and it was less mediated by the teacher than I would have expected. However, they were all waiting their turn to communicate and really listening to each other’s responses. Once the next sound was playing, he seemed to release some of his tension and was ready to discuss how the sounds of police sirens made him feel. Each student was given the opportunity to discuss their feelings, as well as react to others feelings in a respectful way.

Over time, the students became excited about listening to the sounds and discussing their feelings, especially because there is rarely time to do this within their larger classroom environment. They began to feel more comfortable sharing their thoughts and ideas with the group and were becoming more respectful of differences.

In conclusion, all of the students presented with improved attention and focus during the lesson and were more aware of their own feelings and reactions to situations and are beginning to accept the feelings and

reactions of others and understand that the emotions may be different and that is okay. They would often request to complete the “sound guessing game” whenever they would see me in the hallways.

Analysis of Data on Student Learning:

I examined the effect of mindful listening on the students’ Self-awareness as well as social awareness and how they used these feelings to make decisions throughout their school day and found the following:

Prior to beginning the “Sound guessing game”, the book “The Cat Who Wore a Pot on Her Head” was read aloud to the group. This is a silly book, where the cat misses out on a lot of information because she is wearing a pot on her head. Throughout the story, she does silly things because of this. The students loved this story and thought Bendomelina was hilarious! After reading this book, I discussed with the students how important it was to be aware of sounds in our environment and how they may help or hinder our ability to focus. The students started expressing right away how loud the hallway was, and asked to close my door. Then they stated how there are always kids yelling in the halls and it is hard to hear the teacher. We continued to discuss ways that we could “block out” these extraneous sounds and focus on what is in front of us! The students listed many things (looking at the teacher, closing the door, turning on music, etc.) and we tried many of these things. They agreed that closing the door was probably the best and easiest way to drown out the other sounds.

The students loved to discuss their feelings about specific sounds and relate their own personal experiences to the sounds they heard. Each student was given an opportunity to discuss their feelings and react to others’ feelings in a respectful way. The students would often empathize with each other when discussing reactions to sounds (especially ones that brought out emotions of sadness or feeling scared). They could discuss with some support how their feelings were similar and different and were beginning to realize that differences are okay and we need to be mindful of other’s feelings and emotions!

Teacher Participant Names: Jacob Fesko, Darcy Sant, & Heidi Urciuoli

Please update us on any changes you made to your team action plan:

- We were able to stay on track with our original plan for the most part.

Analysis of Data on Teacher Learning: We examined our reflections and found the following:

- Reflection from Darcy: I examined my written reflections and found the following: deep reading was essential as well as re-reading because of the several characters within book one. Each chapter was designated to a given character and it was essential to make the deep reading an active process of thoughtful and deliberate reading to enhance my comprehension as well as make a connection with the characters to fully understand their traits and how they were interwoven into the plot. In the beginning, I also had to re-read parts of previous chapters to help me recall the specifics of the characters and where they left off. Journaling was important to this process. Once I made an emotional connection to the given characters, my attention increased and so did my memory and learning; therefore I was able to fade my re-reading because of mindfulness through deep reading activities. The nonverbal interpretation of coloring was interesting as we all colored the Lannister horse/rider the same, but the other Tyrell horse/rider was different. At this point and time, I was able to select a character I could emotionally relate to in the book (Daenerys

Targaryen) as well as one I did not (Joffrey Baratheon). Another thing I found necessary were graphic organizers/maps. Graphic organizers/maps (e.g., character traits, compare & contrast...) helped me visualize all of the characters and the nine families as I went deeper into the book. Completing the graphic organizers assisted me in keeping everything straight as I am a visual learner. In addition, the ability to dialogue with Heidi and Jake was important to ensure my comprehension as well as give me a different perspective that increased my interest even more in the book, Game of Thrones. The video clip displayed in our presentation also supported my understanding because I could accurately guess who the character would be from the War of Roses.

- Reflection from Jake: I found our deep reading project to be both fun, and filled with practical and effective activities to aid students in their reading comprehension. These academic activities (which we performed while creating and journaling through this project), will help students on a variety of grade levels and academic abilities. My favorite of the activities, and the one that I felt will help students connect/comprehend/retain the text, was the multiple character analysis piece. The activity had us analyze the characters' actions, beliefs and morals, in a way that has us reflect on our own values and personality traits and how these traits would affect the decisions we would have made if put in the same situation. It allowed us to put ourselves in the shoes of the character, looking at those plot altering decisions that they have made, and engage in a type of "Monday Morning Quarterbacking." I feel that this level of connection or "ownership" of a text is the ideal way to improve comprehension, as well as retention, of a text.

Although the applications for the classroom are the most important aspect of our project, the thing I enjoyed most was being able to discuss a piece of literature I love with my friends. I was made aware of Game of Thrones when my brother suggested I watch the show. Being disinterested with most works of fantasy, I was apprehensive about watching the show. But when I began watching, I was instantly hooked. I couldn't get enough! Shortly after, a good friend suggested I read the books, saying "the show does not compare to how good the books are." I was once again apprehensive. I was no fan of fantasy novels, and I have never read a book after watching a movie or television series that I really liked, but I gave it a shot.

Game of Thrones (almost immediately) became my favorite work of fiction. I spoke about it at length to friends that had already read it, and I tried to convince friends who hadn't read it to pick it up. I kept this up for about a year until I had read all five 1000 page books! After I finished these I was very disappointed. I no longer had my favorite literature to look forward to and my passion for the series faded as my time became filled with other activities and priorities. That all changed this year when I was given the opportunity to create a project this piece of literature. I was able to discuss plot lines and my favorite characters once again. I was able to explain the nuances of this mythical fantasy that I had once loved so much and enjoy the series of books all over again.

If I had the opportunity to do this project again, I would have done this project in very close to the same way. I feel that the activities that we chose will all be useful in the general education class room, as well as slightly modified for small group instruction. I am looking forward to using these activities to assist with grade level literature in the classroom. One thing I would have changed is that I would have used the HBO series in comparison to the novels. I always enjoy discussing

(complaining about) the differences between the series and the books and I believe that activities that compared literature to their movie counterpart are effective ways to increase comprehension. Overall, a wonderful experience.

- Reflection from Heidi: Engaging with other peers in a deep reading book club this year, was quite simply, fun! In the past, I have been a part of a monthly book club where we would meet together and discuss our favorite parts of the plot or character. What was different was the full emersion into the story. Half the time was spent discussing the book, then we switched the focus to determining the next novel to read....on to the next. This year, we really spent time with various characters and they became more real. By coloring them, by comparing and contrasting them to other characters as well as myself, and by discussing their setting, (i.e., historical relevancy, cultural norms, and societal expectations), I felt the character come alive. They became friends or enemies, and they lingered in my mind. We had also chosen a book that was made into a show. This allowed us to visually take in the rich scenery as well or to clarify a passage that we did not necessarily understand. Although this may not always be available with every story, I have found that if I utilize pictures on the internet about the historical time or a place in which I have never visited, I have a larger appreciation for the story. Coloring or drawing a scene or character tapped into our sense of touch and made me slow down and focus on the details which I otherwise might have missed. I also found many of these activities relaxing. It would be a logical conclusion that many of our students would enjoy this as well. Many of our students struggle to read age-appropriate books. Seeing visuals, drawing, or replicating a costume or custom may help to engage our students. Allowing small group discussions may create settings where they feel safe to participate or ask questions. As I think about my students, I reflect on how some of them like to verbalize their thoughts, some prefer to create cartoons, while others like to write. Keeping this in mind can help me in the future to help my students share their knowledge in the way that resonates for them. This was a fresh reminder that there is no one way to learn. I hope that I am able to utilize these ideas in my own lesson planning in the future to create confidence and a life-long joy of reading in my students.

Analysis of Data on Student Learning:

- In taking the fictional work, Game of Thrones and engaging in structured activities (e.g., deep reading, re-reading, journaling, nonverbal interpretation, graphic organizers/maps, dialog, video clip...); we feel we have developed some tools that are productive and can transfer them into our teaching now and in the future. During this project, time was spent experimenting with various techniques that could be utilized with our students. We choose to create a multi-sensory book club where adults were participating in the activities. After having worked through a myriad of activities, we feel that we have a better understanding of how to engage others in literature as well as a collection of tools that are separated into age-appropriate groups in which we can employ. As speech-language pathologists and special education teachers we often help children process what is being taught. Although none of us technically teaches literature, we are excited to use our activities with our students in the future to help them better understand what they are learning in their classes.

Teacher Participant Name: Megan Healy

Please update us on any changes you made to your team action plan:

My action plan was having the students in my class deep read into stories where there are characters in crisis, and connect to those characters through writing. I did exactly that, having the students write both

on . I spent a lot of time getting the school's ipads up and running so they could use an app called "popplet" to do a portion of their writing. They also wrote the traditional way, with pencil and paper. **We read as a group a book called "Oh Brother" by Nikki Grimes. I read aloud to them as I projected the story using a document camera on the smartboard so they could all follow along and see the pictures. Before reading, students received a clipboard with a paper with 4 thought bubbles to record their impressions and opinions. The story is written in verse. It is about a boy named Xavier whose mom got remarried, and now her husband and his son Chris are also living in their small apartment. Xavier has a difficult time accepting this new boy as his brother, and sharing his mom. I gave the students 4 writing prompts:**

- 1) Do you know anyone in Xavier's position?**
- 2) How does Xavier feel about sharing his mom?**
- 3) Would you accept Chris as your brother?**
- 4) How does Chris win Xavier's trust?**

Analysis of Data on Teacher Learning: We examined our reflections and found the following:

If I read to students, it is usually something light, funny, and entertaining. I don't think I've ever read the students something with a sad tone, and it was pretty fascinating to see how they responded. My 4th graders, who can usually be behavior problems, were transfixed by the story. I actually had a teacher who was visiting the library come over and whisper to me, "What are you doing different? They are so quiet! I am impressed!" It seems that when asked to have empathy, students can step up to the task with seriousness and focus.

I picked a story I thought many of the students would relate to, knowing that a significant portion of them come from untraditional families, where each sibling in a family doesn't necessarily have the same mom and dad. What I didn't anticipate having to teach was what a stepbrother or stepfather was. It didn't seem to be a term that many of the students were familiar with. Perhaps it was because my students' parents haven't necessarily gotten married, and so it is just a new boyfriend that they are getting used to at home.

Analysis of Data on Student Learning: We examined _____ and found the following:

I examined the students' responses, and found that they could relate to Xavier's situation and could successfully empathize with his character.

Many students were able to relate to Xavier's situation. One said she related to how cramped he felt in the small apartment with 2 added people... she wrote "I got 12 people living in the house." One student doesn't have step-siblings, but still related to the feeling of jealousy, writing "I wanna be the littlest in my family and I don't want my mom to have another kid." Another student wrote "he is going through the same thing as me... when my little step sis came along I wasn't too sure about that." One of the most thoughtful responders really could put herself in Xavier's position. She said that she wouldn't want to accept Chris as her brother because "I am not used to Chris. Chris and his dad might ruin my family's life."

Many had very emotional reactions to Xavier's situation. One student recorded that he thought the fact that Xavier had to share his mom all of the sudden was "unacceptable!" Their reactions tended to be in line with how successfully their blended families were working at home. One student said she would in no way accept Chris as her new brother because "I will be forgotten." Another worried Chris might take advantage of Xavier's mom because "My step sister Marissa is taking advantage of my mom and that makes me very angry." The same student then said, "I would not accept Chris as my brother," predicting, "his mom will probably spend more time with Chris." On the other hand, one boy said he would accept Chris as his brother because "I have a step brother, he is like my real brother." Another said, "I would like Chris to be my brother because I don't want to be lonely."

Changes in My Project:

In my original plan, the focus was on improving the engagement of my third grade students, who most often come to our math group over zealous, and unfocused. Because my time with this group was limited, it was necessary for me work with a different group of students. I then decided to use my first graders for this project. Since I meet with my first grade group in the morning, I was able to extend our block, to include additional time for guided meditations, without taking away from instruction time.

In addition to changing the group which I worked with, I made other revisions to my project along the way. When I set out to work with my third graders, I had created a student reflection sheet , which involved writing before and after mediation. The template which I created was inappropriate for first graders, so I searched for a different way for my students to express their feelings. I came across a sheet with pictures of various faces, depicting feelings; *tired, angry, happy, nervous* etc. I thought that my students could simply circle how they were feeling when we first came together, and then circle their feelings after our mediation. Although we gave this a good shot, this too proved to be too demanding, and did not provide me with useful data for this project. I found that my first graders most always indicated that they felt happy when they first came to our group , and continued to feel “happy” after our meditations .This was not the information I was looking for.

I again revised my data collection process, by making quick observations of my own, and recording students’ behavior before and after meditation. I found that it was easy to do this on my attendance sheets, using an arrow pointing up, if the student appeared overly excited, an arrow down if they were withdrawn and an arrow straight across if they were calm and ready to learn. This new system was more efficient and provided me with useful information, while reflecting on the effectiveness of our meditations.

During the first few weeks of this project, I used scripted guided meditations. Each day I found it necessary to shorten the script, since my students were unable to connect with the readings. This was apparent through their movements and inability to remain settled throughout the guided meditations, having the opposite effect that I wanted. Therefore, I discarded the scripts and created my own guided meditations based on what I felt the kids needed each day. I began to see better results. The kids were calmer. They were able to stay settled for longer periods of time, and they remained more focused throughout the lesson.

Analysis of Data on Teacher Learning:

I made 6 journal entries of my own throughout this project. One before I began using meditations with my students, 4 at various points throughout the project, and one at the end. As I reread my reflections, I was able to see how my project developed and changed throughout. I also learned a lot about the attention span of first graders, how to improve their ability to focus, how much I can realistically expect out of them, and how to recognize their limitations. I also learned some things about myself.

After teaching fourth grade for several years, I had to make many adjustments to work successfully with first graders. I learned that first graders benefit from being given time, and guidance for calming and preparing for learning. I also had to accept that first graders typically see themselves as happy kids, whether they are focused on learning or not. This was a joyful discovery.

Completing this project with my first graders, provided me with the opportunity to see them through a different lens. When I made the change from using the guided meditation scripts to creating my own, I felt a stronger connection to my students. I was able to consider what my students needed to hear in order to move toward inner calm. I varied the intonations of my voice to suit my students, and chose words which I knew they could relate to, and understand. I was “seeing” them rather than looking at the paper I was reading from. At this time, I began to notice positive changes in my students’ behavior.

In addition, our guided meditations are now a seamless transition into the first part of our math lesson. I'm now using the practice of visualization when I introduce our first story problem of the day. I asked students to put their heads down, close their eyes and visualize while I read the problem. We then retell the problem with their heads up and I draw a representation of what they've visualized on the board. I'm finding that this positively impacts my students' learning and directly connects them to our lesson each day. This practice, more than anything, has helped my students to calm their bodies and connect to their learning. I'm now doing this as an extension of a brief meditation, and getting better results. My data supports this. I've noticed connections between my students activity level and their performance on the daily lesson.

Analysis of Data on Student Learning:

I recorded my observations on the same sheet that I record my attendance, and my student's performance as it relates to the objective for each lesson. When looking at my data, I found that, during the month of March, 83% of the time, my students' behavior either stayed the same (if they were calm and ready to learn, prior to the meditations) or improved after the meditations / visualizations.

In this group there are 6 students:

One student was calm and focused on all occasions, before and after our meditations/visualizations. One student improved her focus 50% of the time, from before meditation to after.

One student was absent most of the time, but my data did show improvements in her ability to remain calm and focused 40% of the time, on the days she was present.

The three other students appeared to benefit the majority of the days, and were the ones who needed calming the most. These 3 students are very active boys, and they had a several different substitutes in their classrooms which seemed to negatively impact their behavior and ability to focus. These are the students who showed the most change as a result of our meditation.

We will continue our mediation practice throughout the remainder of the school year.

Teacher Participant Name: Desiree Dillabough

Please update us on any changes you made to your team action plan:

After careful consideration, I decided to pool a few children, rather than the whole class. I focused on children who spent the entire day with me (with the exception of lunch and special). I am responsible for providing ELA, science, social studies, and mathematics to these children daily. This way I had an "all day" observation, rather than snip its throughout the day. This left 14/26 children, which seemed like a reasonable amount for proper data collection. I also sought data twice a week, for 6 weeks.

The procedure was to play music during breakfast, independent classwork time, and prior to recess. I chose two pieces of music. One musical piece was inspired by what I have been learning in my Project Smart class, by YellowBrickCinema. They are "the leader in Sleep Music, Relaxing Music, Study Music, Meditation Music (including Tibetan Music and Shamanic Music), Healing Music, Reiki Music, Zen Music, Spa and Massage Music, and Yoga Music." The other pieces were clean hip-hop songs from famous artists like Drake, Justin Beiber, Nikki Minaj, and Eminem. Music was played during breakfast, Immediately after breakfast was special. I sought feedback from the art,library, and P.E.teachers. Music was then played prior to and during center time. At this time children are required to complete differentiated tasks in the areas of phonics, writing, or problem solving. Children were expected to complete tasks to the best of their ability. Finally, I played music as we packed up for home,

before we played. A large focus was also on transitions, attention, aggression, and the ability to get along safely with peers and teachers. When collecting data, I'd spend one full day selecting one piece of music per day. (For example, if it was classical music, I'd select a song from YellowBrickCinema for each data collection that day.)

Analysis of Data on Teacher Learning: We examined our reflections and found the following:

Analyzing behaviors and work habits twice a week for two months was my goal to gain data. Then I took the average score for each child's collection. I acquired the following evidence:

Student	Morning (ELA)	Afternoon (Science/Social Studies, Math)
A	2/1	1/1
B	2/2	1/2
C	3/2	2/2
D	3/3	3/3
E	1/1	1/2
F	3/2	3/2
G	2/2	1/1
H	3/3	3/2
I	3/2	2/3
J	3/3	2/3
K	3/2	3/2
L	2/2	1/1
M	2/3	2/3

I used a rubric of 1,2,3.

0=Absent	1=high activity	2=moderate activity	3=expectations met
	1=avoiding task/ work shows no effort, often off task	2=task complete/ little effort,some reminders	3=task complete good effort,little or no reminders to stay on task

Analysis of Data on Student Learning: We examined ___ 14 students _____ and found the following:

Each student had a higher level of activity during the afternoon activity.

Only one student was able to maintain expectations during the days of data collections.

Most students needed little (or an increase in) reminders to stay on task.

Students who had a history of behavior problems (and are on behavior plans) had the hardest time adjusting. They needed the most reminders and redirection during days of data collections.

Work habits (quiet voices and cooperation) was the most difficult to maintain, especially in the afternoons.

When a mindful, peaceful environment is practiced consistently, work habits and behaviors are at a minimum. I found that on days I collected data, students had a more difficult time attaining to tasks, especially when the task

exceeded 30 minutes and was in the afternoon versus morning. Students also had a harder time showing effort in their classwork, following school rules, and cooperating with peers.

Teacher Participant Names: Melissa Norton

Please update us on any changes you made to your team action plan:

The only change I made was to ask the student to take a few breaths before looking at each letter in the sight word and think about the sound the letter made before attempting to read the word.

Analysis of Data on Teacher Learning: We examined our reflections and found the following:

Name is changed to protect privacy of the student.

I learned that we teach students many rules and strategies for learning new words; however, many of those strategies do not work even on the simplest of sight word lists. I found this frustrating and I can only imagine that students must feel the same way as they attempt to use strategies and rules they have learned to find out they do not work on “this particular word.” For example, ou does not always make an “ow” sound as in would, should, could. A vowel, followed by a consonant, followed by e at the end does not always make the first vowel long as in the word give. I had believed, as did her mother, that Beverly was learning disabled. As I continued with the intervention I very quickly learning that Beverly could indeed learn with lots of repetition. While reviewing my reflections I noticed that there are many comments about how well she was doing. The following comments from my reflections stand out to me as the positive energy that was coming from our sessions together. “Beverly has actually surprised me with how quickly she is learning new words just from exposure and getting her to really look at all the individual letters before saying the words.” “She really wants to learn.” “She learned more new words today.” “She continues to amaze me.” “I am so proud of how well she is doing.” “Beverly smiles so much when she knows she reads the words correctly.” There are many more of the same. There was not much more that could be said. Beverly was doing amazing. The one thing that made me sad was that her mother did not seem to believe me when I shared the data with her. She said that maybe she learned them for that moment but she couldn’t remember them. I retested her twice on the first list and she had retained every one of the words up to two months later.

Analysis of Data on Student Learning: We examined the data and found the following:

We worked on many rules and strategies to find they did not work on many occasions and decided that practice, practice, practice is what it was going to take to learn many of the sight words. When the student was available at least three days per week she was able to learn quickly with simple, yet consistent exposure. We reviewed the sight word list and then Beverly would read from simple books that included the words she was learning. In 5 sessions she went from 21/40 sight words to 37/40 sight words on one list. We then moved onto a second list but added in the few words she had not yet learned from the first list. Again, in just 5 sessions she went from 23/52 to 41/52 sight words. She also learned the last three words from the first list to make 40/40 on the first list. She now has 46/52 sight words and is working on a third list. She lost some traction on the second list due to poor attendance. The first list was reviewed one month later and again two months later and both times Beverly continued to know 40/40 sight words. I was able to use this information to show that this amazing young lady could not only learn but she could also retain what she learned. Although others felt she may have a learning disability I used the data to show that it could possibly be from lack of exposure due to poor attendance because when she came to our intervention session on a regular basis she learned new words at a fairly rapid pace.

This information reinforced my belief that attendance is critical for learning to take place. I am hopeful that the success this student felt will encourage her to be in attendance on a more regular basis. I know that Beverly has a long way to go yet so I hope to continue to work with her. One other thing I learned along the way is that this student now feels extremely comfortable with me and is willing to come to me when she is having a rough day. We have definitely built a relationship, which may have helped in her willingness to work hard.