

Kindergarten Opening
Post Interview

Interviewer: How were you effective in communicating the purpose?

Teacher: I think the purpose ... I'm going to have to think about what was the purpose. The purpose was for them to have a job to do in the morning, to have their routine and practice and get them occupied so I can do my morning routine for that part of it. Then the purpose of our morning circle is for them to build those conversation skills and to build that sense of community.

I think I give them prompts and reminders ... remember your eye contact ... We're so far along in the year that I can just say their name and they know what they're doing wrong, but giving them reminders: Are you being safe with your words? Are you making eye contact? Are you smiling? Things like that to help prompt them along with how they're going. That's how I feel I'm effective. Then I'll raise my hand and participate and kind of guide the conversation.

The way we do our circles in what the P for C style, so the Philosophy for Children style. They get to choose if they want to share. That's effective, and they feel safe and that they don't have to share if they don't want to or they're not ready, and then I'll share and I'll model. That's how I get across that we're staying on-topic, or how model, how to speak, and how to share.

Interviewer: Which parts of instruction practice do you think are most effective in supporting students to an EP objective?

Teacher: Again, I think it's the prompting and the modeling, me raising my hand and prompting that deeper thinking. I know the objective is to be self-directed and to have those conversation skills, but one of the objectives also is to get that complex thinking and ask questions.

They pretty much have got the conversation skills. As you saw, they're really good at communicating and giving reasons and examples and even counter-examples. They're like, "Oh, I have a counter-example." That's part of the Philosophy for Children Good Thinkers Tool kit. Those three or four things are what we've been working on during our circle time. They're really good at those conversation skills.

This morning I was trying to prompt them with the thinking by saying, "Is summer bad weather?" Then that prompts them to think, "Will I get a sunburn in the summer? But I think it's good weather, bad weather." It gets them questioning. That objective of, you've got the conversation skills down. Let's move to that deeper level thinking and questioning.

Interviewer: What role did organization or planning play in this as far as planning or classroom setup?

Teacher: As far as the morning routine and getting it to be that successful took a lot of practice. It took a lot of tries, and all that didn't work. It did take that, "Oh, Miss Fox I have a note," "Oh, Miss Fox I have parent permission form," "Oh, I have a parent who want to talk to you." For me to be like, "Wait a minute, I can't do this. I need a system so I can be successful in the morning and they can be successful in the morning.

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It took a lot of practice. Finally I find we need the mailbox for them to turn it in. I need something for them to do at their desks. They're working in their green books, which is just basically handwriting skills. In the beginning it's letter recognition, and then it progressively gets a little harder throughout the book. I needed something for them to do independently, and we practice that, and they do it every day.

I think that preparing that, and the practice of, "Oh, that didn't work, let me try something new," or "What can I do?" As teachers we don't have a lot of time. The roll has to be in by 8:10 or 8:15, whatever our time, and if you don't get it turned in they're calling you. It has to be time efficient.

Also the circle, it took a lot of getting there as far as the management of it. We use to go around and each child shared. Then it was like, "Okay, we're coming on 9:00, we have reading groups to do." Then we kind of do this P for C style where they throw it and the get to choose if they want to share. Which took a lot of practice. Then the ball, as far as the ball, we made the ball all together, so it signifies we're a community, we made it, it's special to us. That took time to prepare.

I think just trial and error. Trying things as far as your routine and what works for you and what doesn't work for you. You can really see their growth in their listening an speaking skills. They're making eye contact, they're turning and saying, "Good morning" to their friends. Which is so simple and small, but that's a life skill.

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When you see someone you say, "Good morning" to them. As an adult, you walk around and so many people put their head down and they're not going to say, "Hi" to you. I think even just teaching them to say, "Good morning" is a skill in itself.

Interviewer: What role did behavior management play as far as expectations, procedures, routines, [but 00:06:26] discipline?

Teacher: You didn't probably see a lot of discipline or redirection of behavior. I think I always plan ahead for that. I can anticipate it. If there's any dead time or we're not doing anything time, that's when the behaviors come up. They ... I have really high expectations, so they know what is expected of them. They can do it and they do rise to the occasion.

Again, it's modeling, showing them what it looks like. We have our rules posted, we go over the rules, we do that a lot over and over, remember. At first it's like,

"Here's our rules," and I'll say it: remember eye contact and smile, or safe circle, sit crisscross, sit safe with your body, share the ball, I'll go over it.

Now, today, we were at the point where it's like, "What is it?" They're telling me, and I'll ask them, "What is a safe circle? What do we have to remember when we're speaking?" We have to remember our eye contact. They're at the point where they can kind of internalize it and apply it and they understand what's expected of them, because they're doing it every day. They're practicing a lot.

I ask them, "Why is our circle safe," and they can tell you, "Because we practice. We do it every day," and, "Because nobody says any mean things." We talk a lot about feelings, and we all follow the rules. They're really internalizing it, and hopefully as they get older, that skill just expands and grows.

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Interviewer: How do you think the last one went with regard to student engagement?

Teacher: I think they're pretty engaged when they're sharing in that circle. They're all pretty much listening to each other. You might have seen some of them doing this sign. This is our secret sign. It means, "me and you are the same." That helps them when they're listening. It shows me that they're listening. It's something where they're not like, "I know that. I did that." They can secretly ... it's a secret ... show me that they're listening. That tells me that they're engaged.

They like to hear what they have to say. It is on-content. We're learning, it was from the Wonder curriculum, and we're learning weather, which is our science standard. If you ask them, "Tell me an example about your life," they want to share. In kindergarten, getting them to share is not a challenge. I think it's getting them to listen that's the challenge.

They're doing a really great job, and that took a lot of practice. You heard some of them say, "I was listening to my friend." Then that little sentence prompt helps me ... as another tool that I've implemented ... helps me know that they're listening to each other. If they just say that, then I know they're listening to each other. The way we do that is I'll just model it. I'll say, "I was listening to my friend Joe, and he said this, this, this, and this." Then one kid does it ... "That was a good ..." piles of reinforcement. Then they all want to do it.

It wasn't really a lesson, "This is how you listen," it's very much like modeling and then just implementing and having them see what it looks like and that positive reinforcement for when they do what you want them to do.

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Then when they do what you want them to do when you don't expect them to, that's the cool parts. This wasn't our Philosophy for Children circle where we're doing that deep thinking, but it's very intertwined. You could see them, "I have a counter-example." That's from our Philosophy for Children. Or "I was listening to my friend." It's kind of cool that they're doing those things and applying it at a time

when I'm not expecting it.

Interviewer: It's not a skill in isolation.

Teacher: No. Not at all.

Interviewer: How do you think students found the lesson meaningful or relevant?

Teacher: I think it's relevant because we check the weather every day. Then they're thinking about their own lives; "Tell me about a time when you were in bad weather. What happened? What did you see? How did you feel?" They're sharing their own lives, and it's relevant. We check the weather every day in kindergarten, so we're measuring and that it's changing.

It's also relevant in the skills that they're learning, those conversation skills, those life skills of being self-directed. I think it's relevant because they do care about each other and they do want to listen to each other, and that sense of community is very strong in my classroom because we give them the time.

[00:12:00] We take the time to say "Good morning." It might sound like, "That takes forever. How are you going to wait for twenty-five kids to say good morning?" It's important that they feel important and that they feel like they are part of this whole community. I think that they understand that they contribute to something. Makes it relevant for their life right now in kindergarten but also for their life in the community of where they live, in their jobs, and what they do.

Interviewer: I think the last one is, how would you like to continue to develop this in the future?

Teacher: I think I'm always learning about the routine specifically. Right now I have an aide helping me, but I don't always have that. I think in the future I would like to see how I can do that without her, and how we can maybe get where they are right now sooner in the year. Because it's very difficult for kindergarten when they come in from all different preschools and don't know what was expected of them there, and to get them where they are now took a lot of time and a lot of practice.

[00:14:00] I guess I'll have to do some reflecting and some planning on how to get them there faster. Time is important and they do grow a lot in that short amount of time, but maybe how to better prepare them for the routines and procedures. I'm thinking specifically of transition. What can our transition team do to help them be ready for the routines and procedures in kindergarten? What can they do preschool to kindergarten? There's that step between preschool and kindergarten, and how can I blend what I'm doing in my classroom into that pre-K to help them be successful. I got to figure it out.

Interviewer: Perfect. Thank you so much.

