Inquiry Research Plan

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**Background, Purpose, and Wondering**

I was in sitting in the yearly SCATTER success summit when Dr. Joyce Swarzman, headmistress of Corbett Preparatory School, told all of those in attendance that there is power in the words that we choose. She told us that we have a choice in the words that we say and as educators, we should be choosing to insert positivity whenever possible. Dr. Swarzman also challenged to not think of the color blue. Naturally, every single person in the room thought of the color blue. She related this into the way that we speak to our students. For example, if a student hits another student and the teacher responds with “don’t hit” or “we don’t hit”, the teacher is putting emphasis on the problem rather than the solution. We tell students “don’t hit” or “don’t run” and like asking people not to think of the color blue, it puts the negative behavior at the forefront of the student’s mind.

It is through this experience that I began to consider my current internship classroom. I began to wonder what would happen if I committed to using positive phrasing in my classroom. Going into this inquiry, I have a rough understanding of where my students are about their classroom community. My kids struggle with how they speak to each other and how they treat one another. They have a tendency to treat one another unkindly and my hypothesis is that if asked the students would say that we do not have a strong classroom community. Throughout the course of my time in the education program, I have learned that the teacher has to model what is acceptable in the classroom. The teacher models the expectations of the classroom. It is to reason that if the teacher models and utilizes positive phrasing then the students will follow suit. Finally, one of my goals for this year is to maintain a positive classroom management system and work to develop a positive classroom community. My inquiry will require me to study the effects of my words on the classroom and will provide me with the opportunity to be reflexive about my words that are used throughout the day.

My wondering question that is going to be guiding my inquiry this semester is: How does positive phrasing impact the classroom community?

**Methods**

**Literature Connections**

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| **Article Title** | **Key quotes and ideas related to your wondering** | **Ideas for taking action in your classroom** |
| Positive Guidance Techniques | This article includes practical ways to apply in the classroom.  “Responsive language utilizes positive verbal guidance that is respectful towards children, labels and validates children's feelings, and clarifies rules and responsibilities. Responsive language gives reasons and explanations to children. Adults actively listen to children and respond in a sensitive manner.” | State rules in positive terms.  Make requests and give directions in respectful ways.  Validate children’s feelings.  Clarify classroom rules and give reasons for the limits.  Model the behavior.  Reinforce Appropriate Behavior  Ignore non-disruptive inappropriate behavior.  Offer choices  Redirect and offer acceptable substitutes  Facilitate problem solving  Use logical consequences |
| The Power of Positive Phrasing | Psychological backing about how the brain ignores the words no and don’t.  “Words matter. Words are powerful. Words can lift, or words can destroy. Lets use the power of our words for good, not for evil. We tend to get more of what we focus on -- so let’s focus on what we want to happen.” | Try to eliminate no and don’t from the classroom. |
| Want Positive Behavior? Use Positive Language | “Positive adult language is the professional use of words and tone of voice to enable students to learn in an engaged, active way. This includes learning social skills. To guide children toward choosing and maintaining positive behaviors, school adults need to carefully choose the words and tone of voice we use when speaking to them.” | Convey belief in children  Use direct language  Emphasize description over personal approval  Find positives to name in all students  Name progress |

**Data Collection**

Wondering: How does positive phrasing impact the classroom community?

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| --- | --- |
| **Data I plan to collect:** | **How this data relates to my wondering** |
| Student surveys | Students’ opinions about classroom community |
| Daily reflections | My thinking about what I said and how I perceived the students’ responses. |
| Mood tracking | Tracks students attitudes at the beginning of the day and the end of the day |
| Videos  Field notes | Students attitudes  Tracking of my use of positive phrasing |
| Literature of positive phrasing | Other teachers’ use of positive phrasing in the classroom |

**Timeline**

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| --- | --- |
| **Week** | **Action Plan** |
| 1 | Introduce mood tracking  Take beginning survey  Start daily reflections |
| 2 | Daily reflections  Monitor mood tracking |
| 3 | Daily reflections  Review 3 weeks of reflections  Review lesson video and field notes |

References

Hall, P. (n.d.). The Power of Positive Phrasing. Retrieved November 30, 2016, from http://www.educationworld.com/a\_admin/columnists/hall/hall034.shtml

Want Positive Behavior? Use Positive Language | Responsive Classroom. (2012, April 10). Retrieved November 30, 2016, from https://www.responsiveclassroom.org/want-positive-behavior-use-positive-language/

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