BYRAM HILLS CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

ARMONK, NEW YORK

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Title: *Quality Student Feedback for Kindergarten Students*

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School/Grade: Coman Hill/Kindergarten

SUMMARY OF *INVESTIGATORS OF PRACTICE* ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT

Context:

We are kindergarten teachers at Coman Hill who have been exploring what quality student feedback looks and sounds like in our classrooms. We focused on our newly developed Group Reading Activity Self-Assessment Checklist. This assessment was designed to promote students' metacognitive skills.

In September, 2012, we gathered together and began our journey with *Investigators of Practice.* We were initially interested in exploring *all* of the newly created Language Arts assessments. New assessments had been created by the kindergarten teachers as part of the alignment of the kindergarten language arts curriculum to the CCSS Standards. By analyzing the data generated from these assessments, our intent was to learn about their usefulness to our grade level colleagues, their correlation to classroom performance, the possibility of differentiation based on student performance and the *quality of student feedback elicited.*

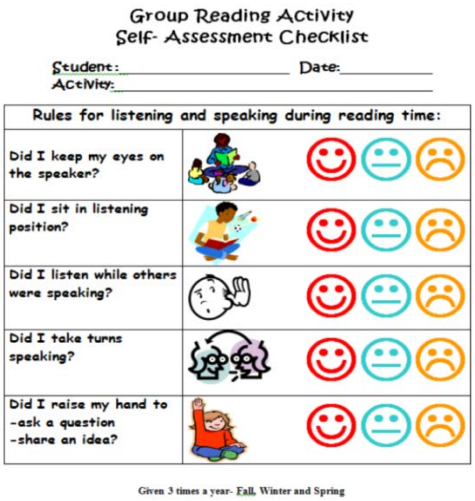
Action Plan:

Our research questions were: *What will we learn from the exploration of quality student feedback? Can quality student feedback be used to improve student engagement, participation and learning in a kindergarten classroom?*

In order to refine our research questions, we narrowed our focus and decided to concentrate on one assessment. Therefore, we selected the *Group Reading Activity Self-Assessment Checklist* (GRAS checklist) which is used following a teacher directed read-aloud. This assessment was designed to provide students the opportunity to reflect upon their behaviors during a group

reading activity and receive quality feedback. The goals of this feedback would be to foster students' engagement, participation and learning behaviors; our intention being to promote students' metacognitive skills by helping them analyze their own behaviors and overall responsibility for their own learning.

We began by using the GRAS Checklist with our whole class following a teacher directed read-aloud activity. Based on our findings, we later modified our action plan to include a teacher component to the GRAS Checklist as well as individual student conferences to provide quality feedback. Below is the GRAS Checklist that students complete:



Group Reading Activity
Self- Assessment Checklist

Student:_____ Date:_____
Activity:_____

Rules for listening and speaking during reading time:	
Did I keep my eyes on the speaker?	
Did I sit in listening position?	
Did I listen while others were speaking?	
Did I take turns speaking?	
Did I raise my hand to -ask a question -share an idea?	

Given 3 times a year- Fall, Winter and Spring

Results:

Our findings were interesting. We found most of the children answered the questions without thinking about their *actual* learning behaviors. In some cases, there was little or no correlation between their *actual performance* and *their answers* on the checklist. Through discussion, we began to understand the necessity for consistency in administration of the GRAS Checklist. Based on these discussions, we incorporated the following changes in order to standardize the administration of the GRAS Checklist across each of the classes.

- Teachers will administer to the whole class and **select 5 students to monitor and track**.
- Teachers will administer the self-assessment monthly.
- Teachers will introduce self-assessment checklist AFTER the group reading activity.
- Teachers will administer the self-assessment checklist by reading the questions line by line in order to increase student understanding, processing time and focus.
- Teachers will administer the self-assessment checklist with "offices" for student privacy in order to promote individual accountability and honesty.
- Students will be instructed to choose one color to fill in the smiley faces to promote their investment in the activity.

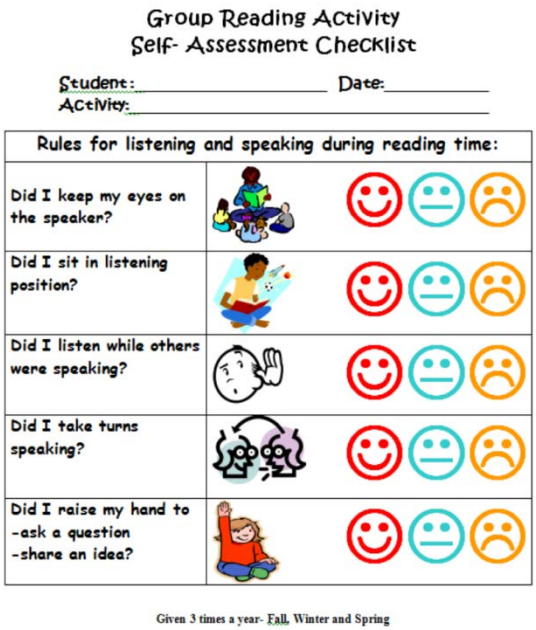
Additionally, the use of the identical GRAS picture prompts during lessons and discussions supported students' self-assessment and correction of learning behaviors. Our experience

underscored the importance of explicitly teaching these behaviors to ensure that students understood the behavioral expectations.

Through our yearlong professional development with district consultant, Diane Cunningham (Learner-Centered Initiatives, LTD.), we enhanced our understanding of quality student feedback. We discovered that quality feedback is:

- Aligned to a specific and shared criteria
- Specific to the learner
    - Identifies strengths and areas to work on
    - Includes concrete and actionable suggestions for improvement
    - Includes examples from the student work
- Immediate
- Positive and encouraging
- Accessible to student in terms of language, form and length

In order to apply these elements of quality feedback, we designed a teacher component to the GRAS Checklist. This checklist is identical to the student checklist, with an additional area for teacher comments. We then met with students individually to compare the two checklists. This conference enabled us to compare the perspective of both student and teacher. To make this information more accessible to the students, we found it necessary to make a side-by-side comparison. Additionally, providing students with immediate feedback reinforced the desired learning behaviors. Below are the student and teacher checklists:

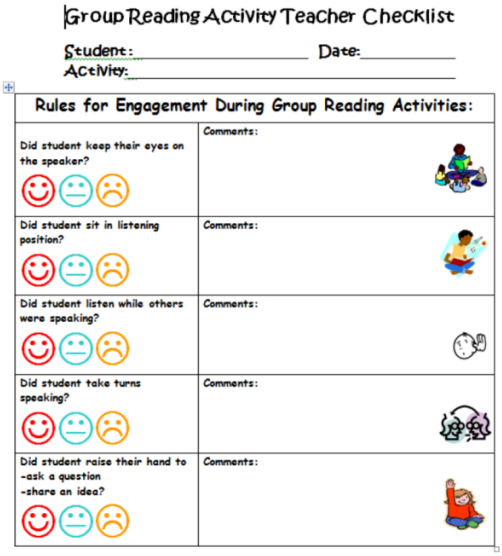


Group Reading Activity
Self- Assessment Checklist

Student:_____ Date:_____
Activity:_____

Rules for listening and speaking during reading time:				
Did I keep my eyes on the speaker?		☺	😐	☹
Did I sit in listening position?		☺	😐	☹
Did I listen while others were speaking?		☺	😐	☹
Did I take turns speaking?		☺	😐	☹
Did I raise my hand to -ask a question -share an idea?		☺	😐	☹

Given 3 times a year- Fall, Winter and Spring



Group Reading Activity Teacher Checklist

Student:_____ Date:_____
Activity:_____

Rules for Engagement During Group Reading Activities:	
Did student keep their eyes on the speaker? ☺ 😐 ☹	Comments:
Did student sit in listening position? ☺ 😐 ☹	Comments:
Did student listen while others were speaking? ☺ 😐 ☹	Comments:
Did student take turns speaking? ☺ 😐 ☹	Comments:
Did student raise their hand to -ask a question -share an idea? ☺ 😐 ☹	Comments:

As we attempted to further research quality student feedback and the use of rubrics and checklists for self-assessment, we found that very little has been documented for kindergarten

children. We began by researching kindergarten rubrics via the internet. One valuable resource that we found during this research was *Teaching Metacognition to K students (Mrs. Potter's Questions):*

- *What were you expected to do? (planning)*
- *What did you do well?(monitoring)*
- *If you had to do this task again, what would you do differently?(regulating)*
- *What help do you need from me? (regulating)*

As a result of our research, we refined the self-assessment checklist and utilized Mrs. Potter's Questions to gather data from the students. Mrs. Potter's Questions helped to facilitate conversations with students with regard to the perception of their learning behaviors during the group reading activity and guided our quality feedback.

Additional research included:

- *How to Assess Authentic Learning*, by Kay Burke (Chapter 8- Metacognitive Reflection, Chapter 9- Observation Checklist, Chapter 11- Interviews and Conferences).
- *Self-Regulation in Early Childhood; Nature and Nurture* by Martha B. Bronson (Chapter 3 – Controlling Emotion and Behavior).
- *Educational Leadership*, September, 2012; 7 Keys to Effective Feedback, by Grant Wiggins.

Implications:

One thing that we have all learned was the need to give students *quality feedback*. We continue to discuss how our feedback will allow the students to maintain ownership and control over their learning behavior. An implication for further research is the development of a student action plan based on the feedback given or "What are the next steps?".

Additional ideas that we still contemplate are:

- The management and timing of student-teacher conferences
- Record keeping of feedback and conferences
- Peer feedback and conferencing
- Student Action Plan

We are just beginning to understand what *quality feedback* looks and sounds like in the kindergarten classroom. We have realized the importance of timely feedback that is "accessible" to young learners. We continue to refine what feedback would be "accessible" to our young learners in terms of language, form, and length given their emerging metacognition. The value of quality feedback is abundantly clear. We are beginning to plant the seeds of metacognitive skills to promote the idea that even the youngest students are responsible for their own learning.