

St. Catherine University

SOPHIA

Masters of Arts in Education Action Research
Papers

Education

5-2022

The Effect of Morning Meetings on Positive Relationships and Negative Behaviors in Kindergarten Students

Kennedy Stace

Follow this and additional works at: <https://sophia.stkate.edu/maed>



Part of the [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#)

The Effect of Morning Meetings on Positive Relationships and Negative Behaviors in
Kindergarten Students

Submitted on March 16, 2022

in fulfillment of final requirements for the MAED degree

Kennedy Stace

Saint Catherine University

St. Paul, Minnesota

Advisor _____

Date _____

Abstract

In a constantly changing world, educators are struggling to find an effective classroom management strategy. Morning meetings are a beneficial tool to maintain a positive relationship while addressing negative behaviors and sustaining academic performance. Participants were students in a kindergarten class attending a rural public school. Their behavior was observed during and after morning meetings. Data was collected daily for four weeks in the form of observations, end-of-day self-reflections, and Likert scale tests. The study concluded that there is a correlation between better grades, more positive behaviors, and stronger relationships. While the morning meeting takes a significant amount of time to introduce effectively, observations suggest that implementing morning meetings as a daily routine has a profound impact on student development.

Keywords: morning meetings, teacher student relationships, behavior, Social Learning Theory, responsive classroom

STACE: MORNING MEETINGS

The education world is constantly changing: new curriculum is being introduced, teaching strategies are being refined, and students' needs are continuously evolving. After familiarizing themselves with the current curriculum, educators are often asked to test or implement new curriculum the following year. As new studies and research are published, teachers must adapt their practices to the new information. Year to year students present a variety of academic, social emotional, and behavioral needs that make each year different than the last. These factors are major sources of stress that are added to an already stressful job. It is challenging for educators to keep up with all of these changes in a fast paced society.

Due to all of these demands, effective classroom management is difficult to achieve year after year. Without the correct infrastructure, students will struggle with the balance of following rules and advancing academically. As society and culture changes, educators are grasping for a foundational classroom management strategy that can establish a positive environment for the class and can be adapted to reach each student. The most essential component to this strategy is fostering a positive relationship with each student. Researcher Kathryn Wentzel came to the conclusion that "children who perceive their teacher as caring and accepting are likely to internalize academic and prosocial goals" (1999).

Morning meetings aid in forming positive relationships between students and with their teacher. Morning meetings are the first thing that occur each day. It is a recurring, sacred time where every child is seen and heard through greetings, is given an opportunity to share experiences, thoughts, and feelings, and build relationships with each other and their teacher through planned activities. In addition, a message preparing them for the lessons of the day is read and contemplated as a class. These meetings create a safe environment while also focusing on critical social and academic skills. Many experts agree, "Morning Meeting allows us to begin

STACE: MORNING MEETINGS

each day as a community of caring and respectful learners" (Kriete & Davis, 2017, p. 2).

According to a psychology researcher, Madiha Sari (2021), when this is achieved, it allows positive education outcomes to occur.

Many educators struggle finding ways to effectively address negative behaviors and maintain a positive relationship while sustaining academic performance. An effective morning meeting enhances academic performance while creating a positive environment with good student behaviors. Morning meetings are fundamental to fulfilling a student's needs and creating a responsive classroom that promotes engaging academics, positive community, effective management, and developmentally appropriate teaching. They provide a variety of advantages and disadvantages that need to be equally considered to determine if this strategy is the foundation that educators are searching for.

To test the effectiveness of morning meetings on behavior and academic access, a study will be conducted at a rural, Midwestern primary school. It will take place in a kindergarten classroom of 22 students, 12 boys and 10 girls, in the fall of 2021 for five weeks. This exploratory study will determine if a morning meeting can increase positive behaviors and decrease negative behaviors in kindergarten students.

Theoretical Framework

The Social Learning Theory was created by Albert Bandura in 1977. His theory states that people learn through observing, modeling, and imitating behaviors. Observational learning can be done through reading, hearing, or observing others handle situations. Through observation, people see certain behaviors being modeled by their peers and role models. Depending on whether or not the behavior is rewarded or punished, people will start to imitate these behaviors. Bandura states, "Fortunately, most human behavior is learned observationally

STACE: MORNING MEETINGS

through modeling: from observing others one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions, this coded information serves as a guide for action." (1977).

This framework can be seen in a classroom setting through morning meetings. Educators have the opportunity to introduce desired behaviors, such as strong work ethic, respect for oneself and others, and an enthusiasm for learning. Educators use morning meetings to demonstrate these behaviors, allowing the students to observe and model them. Students that correctly model these behaviors are rewarded, influencing other students to imitate them to receive the same reward. According to the Social Learning Theory, morning meetings are the foundation for achieving desired behaviors and academic success through observation, modeling, and imitation.

Review of Literature

Bandura's Social Motivational Theory (1977) expresses that children learn through modeling and imitation. In his study, Bandura showed that if adults acted aggressively towards a doll, the child that was observing this behavior was likely to repeat this behavior when the adult was not present. On the other hand, children were likely to be kind to the doll when they observed the adults being kind towards it. It can be argued that his theory emphasizes how important a good role model is in a classroom. In *The Morning Meeting Book* (2002), the authors claim that teachers can use morning meetings to model important social skills that will improve their students' social behavior and academic performance. They continue on to explain that morning meetings are part of the Responsive Classroom approach, which emphasizes active listening, being a contributing member of a community, sharing, empathy, giving appropriate questions and comments to a speaker, taking turns, problem solving, and critical thinking.

STACE: MORNING MEETINGS

The Responsive Classroom (2016) method stresses the importance of a positive classroom environment. In Patrick, Kaplan, and Ryan's article (2011), they explain how a positive classroom environment can be created through mutual respect, teacher support, and promotion of interaction between students. By establishing this type of environment, the authors recorded an increase in motivation, engagement, and achievement among the students.

Rimm-Kaufman and Chiu (2007) echoes Patrick, Kaplan, and Ryan's research. They state that blending social and academic learning leads to better academic performance. In addition to the findings from Patrick, Kaplan, and Ryan's study, Rimm-Kaufman and Chiu found that Responsive Classroom practices also led to greater closeness between teachers and children, more assertiveness, and less fearfulness. However, it is important to note the disadvantages of morning meetings as well. According to Dabbs (2013) and Marais and Meier (2010), two significant disadvantages are a lack of training to effectively implement morning meetings and it is not a quick fix for behaviors due to routine and expectations taking weeks to months to implement.

An important component to creating a positive environment is understanding the cultural background of different students in the classroom. Throughout her book, Delgado Gaitan (2006) advocates that incorporating ways for students to share their culture during morning meetings can give students a sense of acceptance and belonging, making them more receptive to the rules and behaviors demonstrated by the teacher. She also argues it's important to establish a connection with children outside of the mainstream culture in order to allow students to relate to established expectations they may not experience in their culture. To reinforce the morning meeting culture, it is essential to use positive praise instead of negative punishment. Leflots, van Lier, Onghena, & Colpin (2010) cover this concept in their study. They found that teachers who

STACE: MORNING MEETINGS

refrained from using negative remarks towards their students were followed by an increase in on-task behavior and a decrease in talking-out behavior. An earlier study done by Lannie & McCurdy (2007) obtained near similar results as Leflotts, van Lier, Onghena, & Colpin's, but it also went on to study the limitations of using positive praise instead of negative punishment. It's important to emulate these findings in this study while also noting their disadvantages.

Methodology

An experimental design was used to carry out this action research. An observation form was filled out for five specific students monitoring their behavior during morning meetings, specifically keeping their hands to themselves, listening, and their engagement (see Appendix A). In addition, more thorough observations were noted about the entire population throughout the day (see Appendix C). These observations were reflected upon at the end of the day, considering whether any students utilized any skills or behaviors that were highlighted or praised during the morning meeting and if any students needed one-on-one time due to negative behavior (see Appendix B). Furthermore, the proctor completed a daily Likert scale to quantify the students' behavior (see Appendix B).

This study was conducted at a primary school in the Midwest. The population consisted of kindergarten students enrolled at Chisago Lakes. The sample consisted of 22 kindergarten students. Out of the 22 students, 12 were male and 10 were female. Each student was required to participate in morning meetings and the sample was representative of the population.

Five students were selected at the beginning of the study to have their individual growth studied against the growth of the class. The students were randomly selected by putting popsicle sticks in a cup, mixing them up, and selecting five sticks without looking. Each day, observations were conducted during morning meeting to capture the behaviors of the five students,

STACE: MORNING MEETINGS

specifically noting their ability to keep their hands to themselves, listen attentively, and stay engaged for the duration of the morning meeting. Throughout the school day, the proctor took note of the behavior of all the students in the sample. At the end of the day, a form was filled out reflecting on the behavior of the students as a whole. The form questioned if any one-on-one time was spent with a student due to negative behavior and if their behavior improved afterwards, if students utilized the skills presented or praised at morning meeting, and if there was anything significant to note about a student's behavior. Lastly, a Likert scale was filled out at the end of each day to quantify each student's behavior.

Each morning meeting starts off with a greeting where students must look each other in the eye, say the other person's name and wish them a good morning, and shake the other person's hand. Next, students sit in a circle and share their response to a question about their personal life posed by the proctor. Then, the proctor leads students through a message, usually consisting of the date, the extracurricular specialist they will be attending that day, and an introduction into a specific social-emotional lesson. Finally, students participate in a classwide game that helps build community and teamwork. During the sharing, message, and game students are encouraged to keep their hands to themselves, listen, and keep their eyes and ears focused on the speaker. After the conclusion of the morning meeting, the proctor observed students' ability to apply the traits highlighted in the morning meeting. At the end of the study, the proctor examined the observations and data collected from the observation forms, teacher reflections, and Likert scale results and determine if there was any positive behavior growth.

Analysis of Data

The raw data was in the form of short notes and descriptions combined with quantitative values from Likert scales completed by the proctor. To analyze the qualitative and quantitative data, the results from the beginning and the end of the study were compared to establish if there was positive, negative, or no growth among the kindergarten students. Thorough observations were taken on five specific students to give a more detailed look at their growth. In addition, notes and descriptions were recorded for the class as a whole to compare class growth against the growth of the five individual students. These observations were examined to determine if there was a difference in the frequency of negative comments and if that difference was positive or negative. Meanwhile, the Likert scale scores were graphed to show if there was positive or negative growth throughout the study and what that rate of growth was. The resulting trends from the quantitative and qualitative data were used to check the validity of the hypothesis.

Findings

The purpose of this study was to determine if there is a correlation between morning meetings and positive behavior in kindergarten students. The research design was descriptive and consisted of daily observations and self reflections recording qualitative and quantitative data.

Positive Relationships Leading to Positive Behavior

The main research question that this study addressed was if building a positive relationship through morning meetings led to more positive behavior in kindergarten students. To answer this question the proctor completed daily observations, self reflections, and behavioral surveys to compare students' behavior from the beginning of the study to the end. Student behavior, specifically keeping hands to self, listening, and engagement, was observed during morning meeting for five individual students. In addition, class behavior in general was recorded

STACE: MORNING MEETINGS

throughout the day and a self reflection and Likert scale rating student behavior was completed by the proctor at the end of the day. The self-reflection considered questions regarding if any one on one time was spent with a student and, if so, if their behavior improved afterwards, and if the students utilized the skills encouraged at morning meeting during the school day. The Likert scales ranged from a score of one to five, with one meaning the student's behavior was significantly negative and five meaning the student's behavior was significantly positive.

The observations taken on the five students as well as the self reflections on the class as a whole showed that when starting the day with a morning meeting student behavior generally improved over the course of this study. Many negative behaviors were observed at the beginning of the study both in the daily observations and teacher reflections. These behaviors included interrupting, refusing to participate, and touching others, and there were noticeably more negative behaviors observed than positive. When evaluating the self reflections, it was noticed that many negative behaviors were recorded and one-on-one time was needed with multiple students everyday. When one-on-one time was needed with these students, the intervention helped about half of them but had no effect on the rest. In addition, it was observed that roughly half of the students utilized the skills the teacher presented during the morning meeting.

Near the end of the study, the behaviors recorded during daily observations and teacher reflections were generally positive. During morning meetings, the five students observed consistently modeled traits that were demonstrated by the teacher, including keeping their hands to themselves, staying engaged, listening, and waiting their turn. Reviewing the self reflections, it was evident that the majority of the comments on student behavior were positive and negative behaviors were rarely recorded. Only a few students needed one-on-one intervention time, and

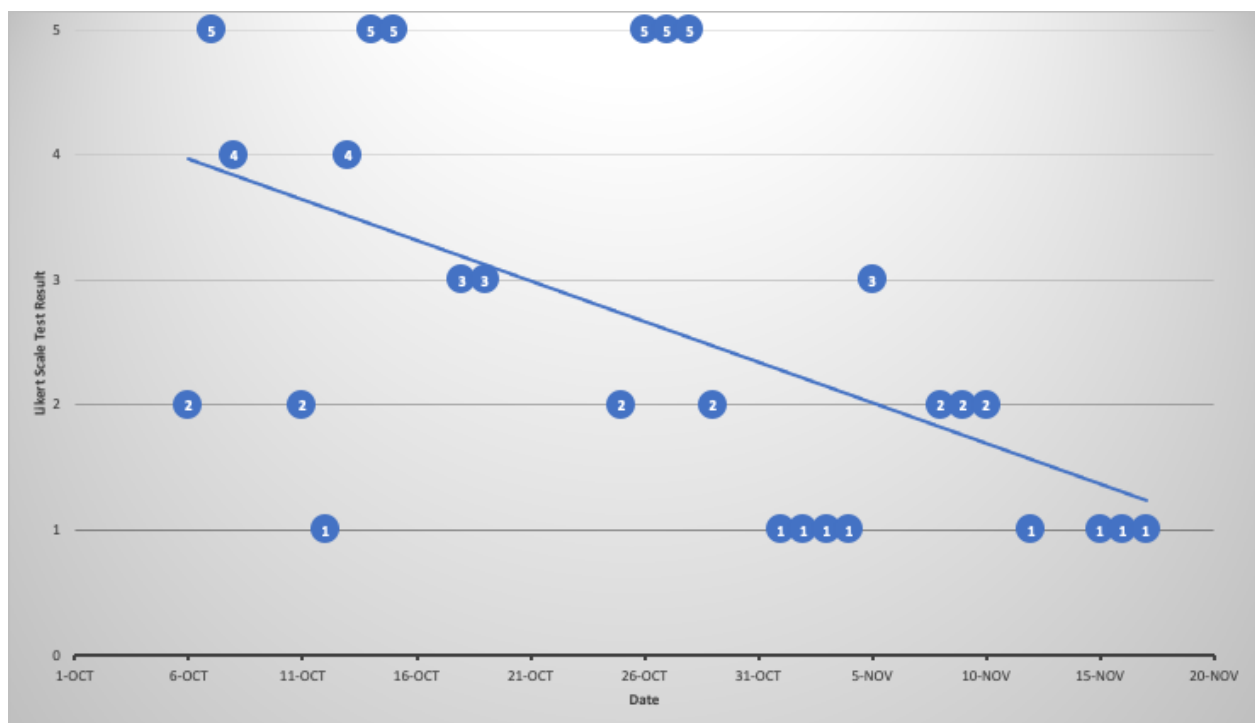
STACE: MORNING MEETINGS

when the intervention occurred, student behavior improved every time. A majority of the class utilized the skills taught during morning meetings.

In addition to daily observations and self reflections, Likert test results recording student behavior were analyzed. The results of that analysis are below. Likert test results of the general class behavior for a given day versus the date the test was taken. One represents a strong positive behavior day and five represents a strong negative behavior day.

Figure 1

Student Behavior Progression Based on Likert Test Results



As shown by the graph, class behavior generally improved over the course of the study. The line of best fit starts around a four at the beginning of the study and ends close to one, meaning that the average class behavior went from negative to significantly positive by the end of the study. With the qualitative observations combined with the results of the Likert scale tests, it is evident that morning meetings have a strong correlation with positive student behavior.

Action Plan

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that morning meetings improve student behavior. When implementing morning meeting at the beginning of the day, daily observations, self-reflections, and Likert scale tests revealed that morning meetings cause an increase in positive behaviors and traits and a decrease in negative behaviors, which reinforces the findings of *The Morning Meeting Book* (2002), among many other sources. By the end of this study, students consistently modeled behaviors present during morning meetings, reinforcing Bandura's Social Motivational Theory (1977). By modeling these behaviors, the teacher laid the foundation for creating a positive classroom environment, an important facet echoed by *The Responsive Classroom* (2016), Rimm-Kaufman and Chiu (2007), and Patrick, Kaplan, and Ryan (2011). In a positive classroom environment, students are more willing to share personal facts and stories about themselves, letting the rest of the class in on their cultural background, which Gaitan (2006) and Leflotts, van Lier, Onghena, & Colpin (2010) advocate as best practice. Based on the knowledge that morning meetings produce more desired behavior and less negative behavior, it is important that morning meetings be implemented consistently. When students consistently exhibit positive behavior, students are more engaged, have better relationships with their teachers and peers, and have a greater capacity for academic success. During morning meetings, students learn how to calm themselves, look at the speaker, learn how to control their voice and hands, leading to a more engaged listener over time. Students who can stay in control of their voice and body, take turns, respect someone else's space, and have positive interactions with others, create positive relationships over time. Encouraging students to sit still and remain engaged for extended periods of time helps build up their academic stamina, leading to greater retention and greater academic success over time. Based on this study and the supporting

STACE: MORNING MEETINGS

literature, schools need to implement morning meetings as a daily practice, with enough time allotted to establish a connection with each student and effectively carry out all its components. School districts need to invest time and money for educators to have the proper training to effectively run a morning meeting. The benefits of morning meetings are too great to ignore.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that morning meetings improve student behavior. When implementing morning meeting at the beginning of the day, daily observations, self-reflections, and Likert scale tests revealed that morning meetings cause an increase in positive behaviors and traits and a decrease in negative behaviors, which reinforces the findings of *The Morning Meeting Book* (2002), among many other sources. By the end of this study, students consistently modeled behaviors present during morning meetings, reinforcing Bandura's Social Motivational Theory (1977). By modeling these behaviors, the teacher laid the foundation for creating a positive classroom environment, an important facet echoed by *The Responsive Classroom* (2016), Rimm-Kaufman and Chiu (2007), and Patrick, Kaplan, and Ryan (2011). In a positive classroom environment, students are more willing to share personal facts and stories about themselves, letting the rest of the class in on their cultural background, which Gaitan (2006) and Leflotts, van Lier, Onghena, & Colpin (2010) advocate as best practice. While there are clearly benefits to morning meetings, it took a significant amount of time for students to become comfortable with the routine and for behaviors to begin to improve. This reinforces the argument presented by Dabbs (2013) and Marais and Meier (2010) that morning meetings are not a quick fix for negative behaviors. Based on the knowledge that morning meetings produce more desired behavior and less negative behavior, it is important that morning meetings be implemented consistently. When students consistently exhibit positive behavior, students are

STACE: MORNING MEETINGS

more engaged, have better relationships with their teachers and peers, and have a greater capacity for academic success. During morning meetings, students learn how to calm themselves, look at the speaker, learn how to control their voice and hands, leading to a more engaged listener over time. Students who can stay in control of their voice and body, take turns, respect someone else's space, and have positive interactions with others, create positive relationships over time.

Encouraging students to sit still and remain engaged for extended periods of time helps build up their academic stamina, leading to greater retention and greater academic success over time.

Based on this study and the supporting literature, schools need to implement morning meetings as a daily practice, with enough time allotted to establish a connection with each student and effectively carry out all its components. School districts need to invest time and money for educators to have the proper training to effectively run a morning meeting. The benefits of morning meetings are too great to ignore.

STACE: MORNING MEETINGS

References

- Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.:Prentice Hall.
- Dabbs, L. (2013). *The Power of the Morning Meeting: 5 Steps Toward Changing Your Classroom and School Culture*. Retrieved from <https://www.edutopia.org/blog/morning-meeting-changing-classroom-culture-lisa-dabbs>
- Delgado Gaitan. (2006). *Building culturally responsive classrooms: A guide for K-6 teachers*. Corwin Press.
- Kriete, R & Davis, C. (2017). *The morning meeting book (3rd ed.)*. Northeast Foundation for Children.
- Lannie, A. L. & McCurdy, B. L. (2007). Preventing disruptive behavior in the urban classroom: Effects of the Good Behavior Game on the student and teacher behavior. *Education & Treatment of Children, 30*(1), pp. 85-98. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com.pearl.stkate.edu/education/docview/202677401/47A1137F570B4CDBPQ/1?accountid=26879>
- Leflotts, G., van Lier, P., Onghena, P., & Colpin, H. (2010). The role of teacher behavior management in the development of disruptive behavior: An intervention study with the good behavior game. *J Abnorm Child Psychol, 38*, pp. 869-882. doi: 10.1007/s10802-010-9411-4
- Marais, P., Meier, C. (2010). Disruptive behaviour in the foundation phase of schooling. *South African Journal of Education, 30*, 41-57. Retrieved from

STACE: MORNING MEETINGS

http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_pdf&pid=S0256-01002010000100004&lng=en&nrm=iso&tlng=en

Responsive Classroom. (2016). What the Research Says. Center for Responsive Schools, Inc.

Rimm-Kaufman, S., & Chiu, Y. (2007). *Promoting social and academic competence in the classroom: An intervention study examining the contribution of the Responsive Classroom approach*. *Psychology in the Schools*, 44(4), 397–413.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.20231>

Patrick, H., Kaplan, A., & Ryan, A. M. (2011). Positive classroom motivational environments: Convergence between mastery goal structure and classroom social climate. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 103(2), 367-382. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a002331>

Appendix

Appendix A

Daily Observation Form

Name	Kept Hands to Self	Listened	Engaged	Other <input type="text"/>
Student A				
Student B				
Student C				
Student D				
Student E				
Total Behaviors:				

STACE: MORNING MEETINGS

Appendix B

Self-reflection Form

What is the date?

Short answer text

Things to note from today:

Long answer text

Today felt...

Fun, easy, enjoyable! 1 2 3 4 5 Frustrating and exhausting

Did you spend one-on-one time with any students? Why? Was there an improvement in the child's behavior?

Long answer text

Did the students utilize the skills taught in morning meeting during work time or social times?

Long answer text
