

***Final Class Discussion: How do rituals and routines help in your teaching?
December 15, 2005***

Kathy: So, is there a time when you've sort of, thought of a ritual or routine and it's helped you specifically in your planning or in your teaching? Sort of, focusing on sort of thinking about the ritual routine of literacy has, sort of, helped you think about what you're going to teach in that day, either y'know, these ones that you've just analyzed or any of the other kind of teaching that you're doing? Can you give each other examples where that concept has made a difference in your planning or your thinking or your teaching? (gestures to student)

Danna: In my classroom a lot we'll – writer's workshop – a lot of times we start it with like a mini-lesson, so, there's the mini-lesson and then they go to their seats and they have their folders and they know how to get them (inaudible), they know what to do, and so, when I wanted to teach something that involved writing it only made sense to do the mini-lesson, have the writing workshop, and follow that routine.

Kathy: So, that's a nice example of how the structure not only helps the students but helps other teachers coming into the room, like yourself. That's really nice.

Emily: I was just gonna say, which is probably why substitutes have such a difficult time because, y'know, they don't know the established rituals and routines and the kids really object to that --

Kathy: Right.

Emily: - where, "That's not the way the teacher does it."

Kathy: That's right, that's right.

Cathy: Um, one thing I think is so important is the terminology that's used, how that sets up the ritual and routine, and that was in the Jennifer Meyers video, where, the one thing I actually used in one of my last, the literacy lesson was the turning to your shoulder partner, and I just loved seeing those kids communicate to each other, and they were coming up with such great ideas, and I think that's because she used such specific terminology that sets up those ideas.

Kathy: Right. Sarah?

Sarah: Just adding to what you were saying about Jen Meyers, um, how she says, "I really," she makes it a point to say, um, "I like how you did this and this is what we need to focus on," and then reiterating on what they did well, and that really has carried through to a lot of how I see like, the entire class and, y'know, working on that, and especially working with a lot students who *are* struggling with emotional disturbance and other things, it's really important to make sure that you're taking the time to say, "I recognize that you did *this* well, but this is something we need to work on at this point."

Kathy: Mm, hm, that's good.

Vinnie: (raises hand) Um, I absolutely, one hundred percent agree with Sarah, and I think even with the whole group, that if you positively reinforce answers, whether they coincide with your opinion or they don't, you encourage more participation across the room. That, and um, my teacher thought it would be a good idea since we have 106 and 7 that I would teach both literacy lessons one day and we had (inaudible) all of our science stuff dumped on our carpet so, my teacher said, y'know, "Just leave the first group at their seats," and that lesson completely, just bombed because they were so unfocused and they were just flipping pages and they knew they were cl- y'know, that they could talk to their tablemates and that – um, for the second lesson I specifically made it a point to clear everything off the rug, and bring them back to the carpet because that was the routine that they were used to and they knew the set of expectations, behavior-wise, of how they're supposed to react.

Kathy: That's a great, sort of natural experiment – for you! Y'know, to see the difference that it makes. I mean, that's really fabulous. Sally?

Sally: I think what I've learned a lot about since – I taught before, but a lot of the ideas that we've listened to are really good ideas, but I really think that you need to, to be flexible with them because your class is *not* Jen Meyer's class, your kids are *not* Jen Meyer's kids, and your routine and ritual needs to fit for *them*, and not just for anyone else, and I think it's really hard, it was hard when teaching these lessons because I had to use the routines and rituals that another teacher had placed with these kids and I think, "Well, when they're *mine* then I can do something different." But, just to remember that those, the ones that you've seen that you've liked in your classes now will not necessarily translate into your new class because it's a completely new thing, so I think that, come in with a few ideas but also come in with the idea that you need to be flexible because your kids are not the same.

Kathy: And, of course that's my, the whole sort of focus in this program of sort really knowing your learners, or listening, so that you can really develop pedagogy from each particular context *and*, the idea, hopefully, of rituals and routines gives you sort of some patterns of behavior that you can, y'know, some patterns of action that you can implement that are based on the particular context, but I think that's really – Ashley?

Ashley: Um, my teacher and I were talking about this this week actually, um, number one that, a lot of these kids don't have rituals and routines outside of the classroom, and so for them to come in at 8:30 and leave at 3:30, and to have these routines is a nice thing for them because outside of the classroom they don't, and also, how it's good for them to learn how to have routines and then to maybe establish those in their life outside of class because – and my teacher was talking to one of the little girls' moms who is always late, never wears her uniform, never does her homework, and the teacher wanted to say, y'know, *kind of* was beating around the bush and saying to the mom, "She *has* to establish routines, and she *has* to wear her uniform, and she *has* to do her homework

every night and she has to be here on time,” and, I think it’s setting a good example in the classroom for them, these kids. I mean, they can’t change what their, the way their parents are gonna act but in their, y’know, to, as little people to teach them that routines are good things.

Kathy: Mm, hm, and it gives them a habit -

Ashley: Yeah.

Kathy: - to hold onto past your class.

Cathy: I think that’s one of the unique experiences of being able to observe the teacher’s practices that you’re working with ‘cause then you can find the, you can listen to it and find the balance of what you need to change and be critical of it that way, but for discipline I really disagree with some things that my classroom mentor was doing, so when I had a chance to lead the class a couple times I did a different, um, had a different routine for that and it worked really well for me, so I think that goes along with like, finding your own way of doing things.

Todd: Yeah, and I think that like, the one problem I’m having is, if you wanna try something like what Sally said, trying your own rituals and routines, especially when you’re only there two days, right, I think it’ll get easier as you’re there more and more --

Kathy: Mm, hm, yeah.

Todd: -- because I tried this math class, and I was doing, I’m teaching math right now and Vinnie (?) teaches them literacy, and I had to teach one in the morning and then one in the afternoon and I tried these routines in the morning and they just weren’t used to it, they weren’t what they, and it was too much too soon for them, so it’s great to have a second chance, you just, (laughs) “Whoop, scratch that, (makes hand motion as though crossing out on paper) let’s go on, let’s try again.”

Vinnie: I think that’s what makes our opportunity so unique is that you and I have the chance to do it twice.

Kathy: Yeah.

Todd: Yeah.

Vinnie: So, if we *do* mess up or, y’know, something doesn’t work, we can try something *completely* different, and, y’know, institute something completely new with the second group, and then, it’s like – I mean, I try to write a record of what I do with each of my lessons and reflect back on it and I’ve noticed that 106 and 107 are two completely different sets of classrooms with two completely different personalities and what works with one class doesn’t work with the other, and I have two separate lesson plans because I know, *now*, from teaching both classes that they are just two different sets of people.

Kathy: And, that's another example of what Sally was saying about needing to really adapt to the different kids.

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