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Through this study on the use of exit slips in the classroom, it was found that exit slips were an effective way to help answer students' questions, motivate students to take ownership of their learning, and provide the teacher with an accurate picture of where students are in their understanding of the material. The results of the data collected and the student interviews conducted at the end of the study showed that the use of exit slips in the classroom can be beneficial. Students said that they were able to use the feedback given to them on their exit slips to study and help them improve their performance in the classroom. The results of this study are consistent with what other research has found, and that is that exit slips can be an effective tool in the classroom.

Introduction

What is the problem? Students may feel embarrassed to ask a question they have. Other students may be so confused on a topic that they don't even know what questions to ask. On the other hand, some students are very curious and want to ask a million questions about the current topic being taught. Whatever the case may be, providing an exit slip for students allows them to jot down any questions or even other thoughts and feedback they may have as soon as they think of them. Exit slips can also help students to engage more fully in the class and increase their motivation, as they take a little more control of their own learning. Finally, exit slips provide a quick and effective way for teachers to assess where their students are at in their understanding of the new topics.

Exit slips are very versatile and can be used in many different content areas. My research took place in a 7th grade math class, so the exit slips were used to help the students meet Ohio's Mathematic Learning Standards for the 7th grade. The exit slips are also meant to be an additional resource to help students express themselves and where they are in their understanding of the content. Students can use the exit slips to make notes, ask questions, show their thought process, and just give the teacher an idea of where they are in general in learning the new material.

Overall, exit slips can be used in a variety of ways and their place in the classroom can be determined by the teacher, depending on the needs of the students. The purpose of my research is to determine: Are exit slips effective in helping students get their questions answered, motivating students to take control of their education, and giving the teacher a deeper understanding of how well the students are understanding a certain concept?

Literature Review

There are many different purposes for exit slips in the classroom. There are four different types of prompts that can be used with exit slips; they are: Prompts that provide formative assessment data, Prompts that stimulate student self-analysis, Prompts that focus on instructional strategies, and Prompts that are open communications to the teacher (Marzano, 2012). Each of these serve a unique purpose in the classroom and teachers may determine which type of prompt(s) will best assist student achievement in their own classroom. But no matter what the specific purpose of the exit tickets is, having students reflect on their work is an important part of effective lessons and exit slips are one main way to help students do this.

In 2012, Leigh conducted a study on how to help students "think critically about content" and how to keep a "reflective conversation" alive in the classroom (Leigh, 2012). The main conclusion from the study is the use of exit slips. Exit slips can be passed out at any time during the class period and can be used as "rituals for thinking" (Leigh, 2012). They are beneficial for students, since they offer a "physical space to digest ideas, to question, to ponder, to ruminate over what has been shared and discussed in class" (Leigh, 2012). Learning can also be documented through the use of exit slips. The study was conducted at the college level and took place over a 14-week period. 608 exit slips were produced by 44 students during that time. The two main methods of collecting data were the exit slips themselves and student feedback collected in or after class about the exit slips. The results covered "Vocabulary and Theoretical Reflections; Action Questioning, Connecting, and Learner Reflections; and Opening and Identifying Reflections from the category Learning Community" (Leigh, 2012). The results support the idea of using exit slips within the classroom. Through the use of exit slips students were better able to make connections between existing knowledge and new knowledge, reflect

on their own actions and processes in the classroom, see themselves as true learners, and identify with their peers in the class. Exit slips can serve as "review of material, help in absorbing new information, encourage divergent thinking, and promote self-expression. They also foster ownership of ideas" (Leigh, 2012). Another benefit of using exit slips in the classroom is that they provide a "safe place to respond and ask questions" students would normally not ask in class (Leigh, 2012). Exit slips can be a great resource in the classroom, even if they are not used daily, as it is not "how often it is used; rather, in how it is used" (Leigh, 2012).

But before exit slips can be effective in the classroom, teachers must have well-formed relationships with their students. Frymier and Houser conducted two studies in 2000 relating to teacher-student relationships and their effect on student performance and motivation. The first study examined "students' perceptions of the importance of the communication skills to effective teaching" while the second study focused on investigating the "students' perceptions of the use of communication skills by specific teacher and their relation to students' learning" (Frymier & Houser, 2000). The results of both studies showed that students feel good communication skills are a key quality of effective teachers and that when a teacher is able to effectively communicate, student learning and motivation increases. Student motivation is a key part of allowing exit slips to be effective in the classroom. In 1992, Ames studied how different learning environments in the classroom affect student motivation, specifically relating the research conducted to the achievement goal theory of motivation. One of the main elements that has an impact on students' learning is the design of tasks and learning activities. Students' perceptions of these tasks "influence how they approach learning" (Ames, 1992). They will use the tasks to judge their "ability, their willingness to apply effortful strategies, and their feelings of satisfaction" (Ames, 1992). Another main element affecting student learning, as well as their motivation, is

evaluation and recognition within the classroom. Students who do not have confidence in their

own abilities are "at risk for exhibiting a learned helpless response pattern" (Ames, 1992). To

help students avoid this behavior and mindset, evaluation must be based "on progress in relation

to short-term goals" and recognition based on "meaningful aspects of performance" (Ames,

1992). When rewards are given meaningfully, they can enhance achievement-directed behavior

and increase task persistence by shifting the focus away from only a student's ability. The third

and final element this article discusses is authority. The "degree to which the teacher involves

the children in decision making" has an impact on students' motivation (Ames, 1992). By

allowing students to "have a say in establishing priorities in task completion, method of learning,

or pace of learning," they are taking on more responsibility for their own education and will

likely become more motivated (Ames, 1992). Another key component to students' motivation is

their own goals. Dowson and McInerney conducted a research study on middle school students

in 2003, looking at their goals in relation to their achievement and their motivation. The results

of this study showed that there were multiple motivational goals that students linked to their

academic achievement. There were three academic goals and five social goals. Also, the

analysis identified, "each of these goals in terms of their component behaviors, affects, and

cognitions; that students did not hold these goals in isolation; and that students' multiple goals

interacted in conflicting, converging, and compensatory ways to influence students' academic

motivation and performance" (Dowson & McInerney, 2003). However, while it greatly helps

when students have a strong relationship with their teacher and are motivated to truly learn, there

is not a guarantee that all students will succeed in the classroom automatically. There will still

be some students that tend to avoid asking questions and seeking help when they need it more

than others. Ryan, Gheen, and Midgley studied these students and their situations in 1998. They

conducted a study with 516 students in 63 math classes across 3 school districts. The results

showed that "one characteristic of students that has been found to be related to help-seeking

behavior is their academic self-efficacy" (Ryan, Gheen, & Midgley, 1998). Students who are

confident in their abilities are not afraid of failure and do not worry about others attributing their

questions to a lack of ability, while students who are less secure and have low self-efficacy are

"more likely to believe that others will think that their need for help indicates that they lack

ability" and so they are less likely to ask for help (Ryan, Gheen, & Midgley, 1998). So the

students who actually need the most help are the ones who tend to seek assistance the least. In

order to help change this, the study's results indicated that classrooms' goal structure should be

"task-focused" rather than being based on "relative ability" (Ryan, Gheen, & Midgley, 1998). If

students perceive that the focus is on "understanding, mastery, and the intrinsic value of learning,

rather than on competition and proving one's ability," then they are more likely to seek help and

ultimately succeed (Ryan, Gheen, & Midgley, 1998). Huet, Motak, and Sakdavong also

conducted research relating to when and why students ask questions. They did this in 2016 and

looked at students' learning strategies, specifically focusing on which students ask questions and

in what scenarios. There are many students who "fail to use help appropriately and efficiently"

(Huet, Moták, & Sakdavong, 2016). Even when help is available and would greatly benefit the

student, sometimes the student fails to seek assistance. Also, there are some students who do not

improve their performance greatly after seeking help the first time and this could lead to the

student avoiding asking for any help in the future. Through research, a strong correlation was

found between "motivational factors, such as achievement goals and self-efficacy, and at least

help-seeking intentions" (Huet, Moták, & Sakdavong, 2016). The study examined the main

differences between students who avoid help and students who seek help in order to better understand how teachers can reach all of their students.

There are also other benefits of using exit slips in the classroom, besides increasing students' motivation and assisting them in getting the help they need. One of these other benefits is reinforcing new information students have learned and helping them to gain a deeper understanding of the topic. This can be done through the teacher providing different types and amounts of feedback. In 2007, Berenson examined the effects of different amounts and types of feedback on students' exit slips. A study was conducted on three different high school pre-calculus classes in which "each class received verbal feedback on their exit slips, one class also received process feedback, and one class also received task feedback" (Berenson, 2017). One main reason for using exit slips is because "Exit slips provide students space to digest ideas and thoughts they may have had in class or about an assignment on which they have worked" (Berenson, 2017). Exit slips document learning and emphasize the process of learning as well (Berenson, 2017). Overall, the study showed positive support for the use of exit slips, but there were no significant differences in student performance based on the type of feedback given.

Educators must be constantly assessing their students and their performance but there are many ways to go about doing this. There is both formative and summative assessment and each has a place within the classroom. Assessment within classrooms is essential, because the more information teachers have about students, "the clearer the picture about their achievement and where gaps in student understanding may be" (Garrison & Ehringhaus, 2007). Summative assessments are "given periodically to determine at a particular point in time what students know and do not know," while formative assessment is "part of the instructional process" (Garrison & Ehringhaus, 2007). Formative assessment should occur continuously in the classroom, so that

teachers can adjust their teaching strategies while students are still learning the new material. In

order to be truly successful, students must be "involved in the assessment process," so that they

can be more fully engaged as they become assessors of their own learning (Garrison &

Ehringhaus, 2007). One instructional strategy that can be used for formative assessment is the

use of exit slips. Exit slips can provide teachers with "significant insight into the degree and

depth of understanding" (Garrison & Ehringhaus, 2007). They can be used to promote deeper

thinking and engage students in dialogue with their peers, as well to determine how much of an

understanding students have gained during a class period. Overall, exit slips are an effective

method of formative assessment for teachers to implement in their classrooms. Simply handing

an exit slip to the students will not benefit them however, so teachers must learn to effectively

use formative assessment to have a powerful impact on student motivation and achievement.

Formative assessment is defined as, "a process through which assessment-elicited evidence of

student learning is gathered and instruction is modifies in response to feedback" (Cauley &

McMillan, 2010). Formative assessment should be "integrated with instruction and ideally

provide a seamless process of assessment followed by instruction" (Cauley & McMillan, 2010).

In this way, there is a 'formative assessment cycle' which consists of ongoing student

engagement, ongoing assessment, ongoing feedback, instructional correctives by teachers and

students, and student motivation (Cauley & McMillan, 2010). In order to ensure that formative

assessment in the classroom results in greater student motivation and learning, there are five key

practices a teacher can implement. These are: "Provide clear learning targets, Offer feedback

about progress toward meeting learning targets, Attribute student success and mastery to

moderate effort, Encourage student self-assessment, and Help students set attainable goals for

improvement" (Cauley & McMillan, 2010). In this way, teachers can empower their students

and increase their motivation within the classroom. In general, "students learn best when they can construct their own knowledge" but teachers must support students in doing this (Baron, 2016). Teachers must guide their students appropriately and use strategic tools to assess students. One of these tools that can be used for formative assessment is the exit slip. Specific questions can be asked on the exit slips to "find evidence of student thinking, assess where students are with respect to the learning goals, and help inform the next lesson" (Baron, 2016). Exit slips help to inform teachers what types of activities and practice problems the students need in order to gain a deeper understanding of the topic. It is a good idea to ask oneself, "What could students say that would indicate that they really understood the point of the lesson and the value of what we learned today?" when creating the exit slips for a class (Baron, 2016). By paying attention to students' reflections and feedback, teachers show that they truly value their students' thinking and this increases their motivation. Also, within the classroom assessment should not take place just once during a period, but throughout the entire class. And there are many different methods of assessment teachers can use in their classrooms before, during, and after instruction. One main suggested practice for meaningful assessment after instruction was the use of exit slips. Some ideas for what to put on the exit slips are to have the students "summarize the main idea and one detail from the chapter just discussed" or to "write down one thing your group accomplished today, one question you have, and the next step your group will take" (Conderman & Hedin, 2012). Through the use of exit slips in the classroom, teachers can assess student responses to "provide specific feedback to students and help students set and monitor individualized goals" (Conderman & Hedin, 2012). In order to have the most success possible using exit slips, teachers and students must both be actively involved.

Methodology

This research was conducted in a 7th grade mathematics class at a middle school in Ohio.

Are exit slips effective in helping students get their questions answered?

Students were required to complete an exit slip once a week which contained a reflection question for the students to answer (See *Appendix A* for sample questions). On all other days, students were still given access to exit slips in order to write down any thoughts or questions that came to mind, but the slips were not a requirement on those days. On optional days, note cards were passed out at the beginning of each class to all students and then collected at the end regardless of whether or not students wrote anything on the cards; they were then sorted at a later time into piles of cards containing questions and cards left blank.

Are exit slips effective in giving the teacher a deeper understanding of how well the students are understanding a certain concept?

In analyzing the exit slips, the responses were categorized by what questions were asked, looking specifically for a common trend in what confused students, what wonderings or noticings they had, etc.

Are exit slips effective in motivating students to take control of their education?

Exit slips were also categorized by who they came from. The students were placed into three categories based on their 6th grade Math OAA score, their most recent STAR Assessment score, and their current grade in the class at the end of the research time period. Category 1 students scored Proficient or above (700+) on their 6th grade Math OAA, Accelerated or above (800+) on their STAR Assessment, and currently had A in the class. Category 2 students scored

Basic (670-699) on their 6th grade Math OAA, Basic or Proficient (700-799) on their STAR

Assessment, and currently had a B or C in the class. Category 3 students scored Limited (568-

669) on their 6th grade Math OAA, Limited (585-699) on their STAR Assessment, and currently

had a D or F in the class. Exit slips from all three categories were analyzed and compared for

any trends or noticings. Another analysis that took place was looking for patterns in how many

exit slips were filled out on optional days, who filled out exit slips on those days, and how often

individual students repeatedly used the exit slips when they were optional. Also, towards the end

of the process, a few students from each category were interviewed, being asked 6 questions

about their thoughts on and experiences with the exit slips (See *Appendix B* for sample

questions).

Data and Analysis

Over the course of two weeks students were required to complete two exit slips and given

the option to complete them on all the other days as well. The students had been given a

required exit slip to complete a few weeks before the two-week time frame in which the data was

collected so that they would know what to expect and what the feedback being given would look

like. Then, during the time of the study, the topics of the questions being asked were recorded

along with student work samples, as well as the number of students completing optional exit

slips in each class and whether those students had completed an optional exit slip before.

Finally, after the two weeks were over, six students were selected to be interviewed about the use

of the exit slips. What follows now are the results of the study.

During the interviews about the use of the exit slips in the classroom, of the six students

five of them said they found them to be "very helpful" with the other student saying it helped

"only sometimes." And all of the students said that they would like to see the use of the slips

during class continue in the future. When asked how many times per week the student took advantage of the optional exit slips, four of the students said once or twice a week, one said three or four times a week, and the other said every day. In reflecting on the helpfulness of the feedback given, students in Categories 1 and 2 stated that the feedback was "always clear" and assisted them in their understanding. Students in Category 1 even mentioned that they were able to use the feedback given on the slips to study and contributed that to part of their success on a quiz that was given over the current unit being covered.

Some common themes for the reason students chose to use the exit slips on the optional days were evident during the interviews. Students in Categories 1 and 2 said that they wrote down a question on the exit slips to receive feedback on either because they were nervous and did not want to ask in front of the whole class or because they needed a specific question answered and the teacher's response had been given too quickly or was confusing. Students in Category 3 said they chose to use an exit slip when they realized they were struggling with a topic or new content had been introduced that they were confused on.

While the feedback from the students during the interviews was almost all positive about the use of the exit slips, there were many days when only a handful of students filled out an exit slip when they were optional. Below is a chart showing the number of students, broken down by class period, showing the number of student responses on optional days. (Note: There are 25 students in A Class, 26 students in B Class, and 28 students in C Class.)

# of Student Responses on Optional Days
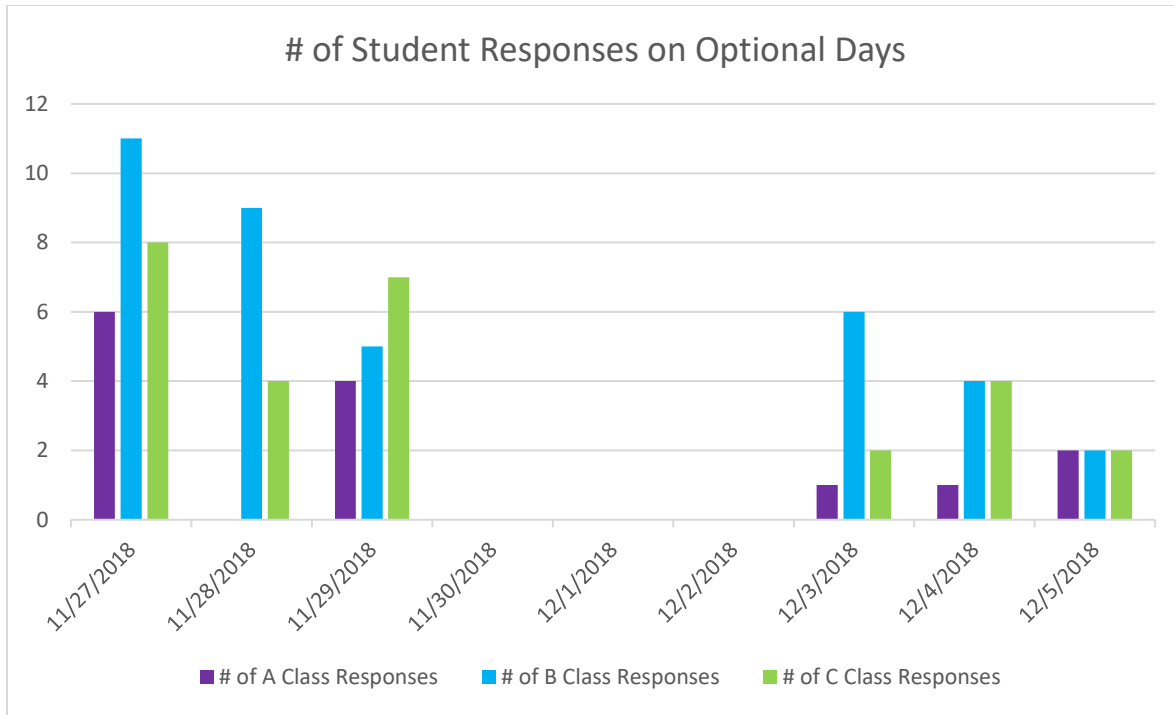
To follow up on the previous chart, the following diagram displays the number of students who filled out a slip for the first time compared with students who had filled out slips before on any given optional day. The data is once again broken up by class period.
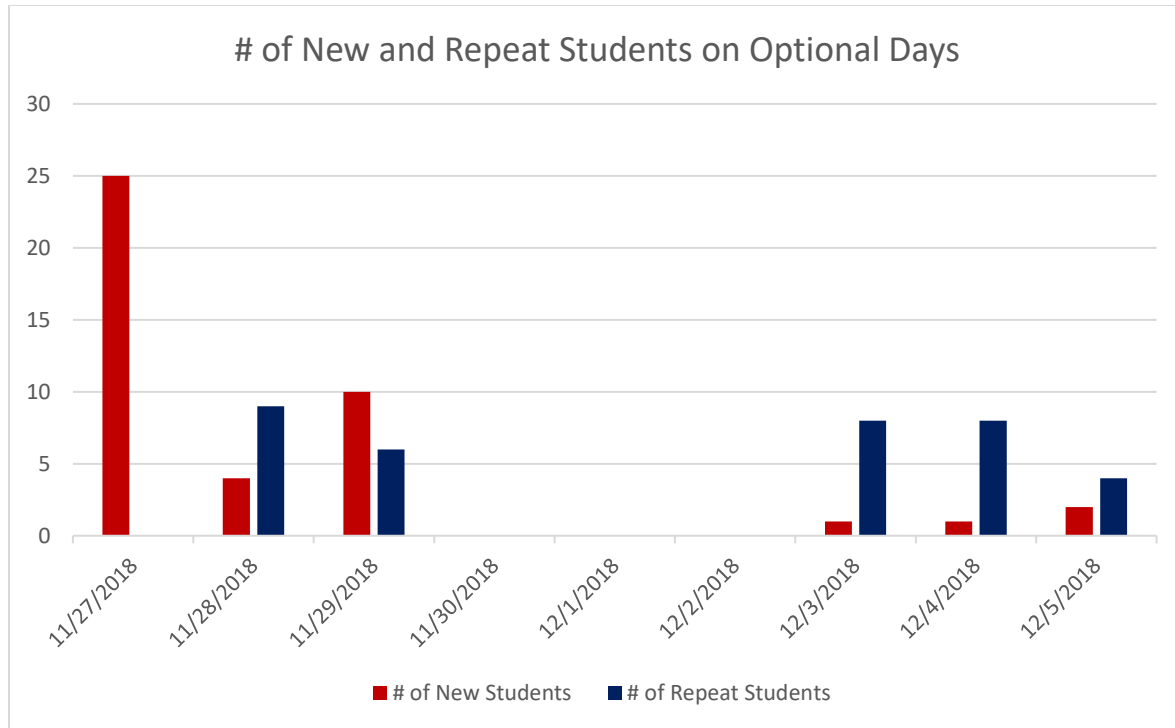
When students were asked for suggestions on how to improve the use of the exit slips in the classroom there were not too many suggestions for changes. One student did say that more space to write down their questions would be helpful and another stated that the slips should be required more often towards the beginning of a unit, so that all students are thinking of what questions they have and are receiving feedback to help them gain a deeper understanding of the content even at the beginning of the unit. This student thought that this would then help all students as they built on the information learned at the beginning of the unit and then the slips would need to be required less as the unit progressed.

One final pattern that was seen in the exit slips, particularly on days which they were required, is that students in Category 3 tended to write, "I understand everything," "I'm good," or "I don't have any questions," as can be seen in the following student sample.

Name: _____   Date: 11/12/15

Please answer the following question to the best of your ability. You will receive feedback on all that you write in order to help you deepen your understanding of the mathematical content we are currently covering in class.

> ➤ Where do you believe you are in your understanding of the content we are currently covering in class? What is one topic you fully understand? What is one topic that you are still struggling to understand? Explain your answers.

Good

A sample response of the feedback provided to a student like this can be seen below.

I'm glad you feel confident in your understanding of all the content we're learning. But please be a little more thorough in your response to the next exit ticket I ask you to complete.
If anything changes and you do get confused, please let us know how we can help. You do seem to do a good job of asking questions in class, so keep that up. We are here to help you succeed!

A final student work sample from a day on which the exit slips were required follows this. The student thoroughly answered the given prompt and responded in an acceptable manner to the question asked. The feedback given to that student is also shown below.

Name: ~~[redacted]~~   Date: 11/12/18

Please answer the following question to the best of your ability. You will receive feedback on all that you write in order to help you deepen your understanding of the mathematical content we are currently covering in class.

> Where do you believe you are in your understanding of the content we are currently covering in class? What is one topic you fully understand? What is one topic that you are still struggling to understand? Explain your answers.

I understand simple interest. I'm struggling to understand Sales Tax, Tip, & markup. for Exa. $46 Shoes; 2.9% tax

I'm glad that you are confident in your ability to apply the concept of simple interest & use that formula!

Remember that "tax", "tip", & "markup" are all key words that mean an amount will be _added_ onto the original price. If shoes cost $46 and you have to pay a 2.9% tax on them, first find 2.9% of $46 by turning the percent into a decimal & multiplying it by the original price: 2.9% ÷ 100 = 0.029, 0.029 × 46 = $1.33. Then add the tax onto the original price: $46 + $1.33 = $47.33 total. If you have a tip or tax to add on, your total should always be greater than the original price.

Limitations

A few limitations of this study are the short time frame in which the data was collected, the fact that the research was done only in regular and inclusion classes, and that not all students filled out an exit slip the second time that it was required.

The study was conducted only over a two-week period. It would have been a stronger study if there was more data collected over a longer period of time, but two weeks was all I had. If the study was extended, I could have given out the required slip on the same day every week so that the students would know what to expect. Also, there might have been a larger amount of students take advantage of the exit slips on the optional days if more material had been covered or another, new unit was started.

The research was conducted during three periods of each school day, but A class is a regular class and B and C classes are inclusion classes. The four and final period of the day, D class, is an honors class and I did not conduct this study with that group of students. More data could have been added to the collection and a comparison between regular and honors classes could have been studied. Adding on that additional layer could have strengthened the study in general.

A final limitation of the study is that for the second required exit slip, only about 50 to 75% of students in each class filled out the slips. This caused a lack of data for analysis and comparison between the two required days and the required versus optional days. This leaves room for interpretation as to why some students chose to not fill out the slip, even when it was required, and raises questions about how much this impacted students' perceptions of the exit slips and how much it affected the study overall.

Conclusions

Overall I believe that my own findings in regards to the use of exit slips in the classroom were fairly consistent with past research that has been done on exit slips. Research in general supports the use of exit slips in the classroom and states that the slips can deepen students' understanding of the content, engage them in the unit, and help them take ownership of their learning. All of this was evident to me during the two week period in which students completed exit slips through my observations of the students, their own responses on the slips, and their thoughts shared during the final interviews.

While student responses varied on the exit slips, the questions asked were usually related to what was currently being covered in class that day and the slip either contained a question about the vocabulary, a certain formula or process, or a specific example that the student did not understand. When reviewing the exit slips each night and providing feedback on them, I was able to gain a clearer picture of what the students were able to catch on to very quickly and what topics the students were having a hard time with. I was surprised at how easy the slips made it to see a pattern in students' understanding. This then informed the instruction for the next day, as I was able to assume that if a large majority of the students who filled out an exit slip had the same question or were struggling with a specific topic, then probably there were other students in the class with the same question who did not fill out an exit slip and therefore it would be beneficial to all students to take the time to delve further into the difficult topic.

There were many times when I could predict what types of questions students would be asking on their slips, if they had chosen to fill one out, based on what we had covered in class that day, but there were some student responses that came as a surprise. For example, there is one student who was usually either sleeping in class or sat there, awake, but did nothing. Then

one day the student filled out an optional exit slip and came to talk to me about it after class as well. During class that day the students had been working with partners and this student had decided to actually participate and was raising his hand to ask me all sorts of questions, which was very unusual for him. On his slip he had written that he felt much more comfortable asking questions and working in that small-group setting and he came up to tell me that in person as well. This admission from him was surprising and very helpful, as I then knew to check in on him individually every day to answer any questions and see how he was doing. This was a turning point for the student and I have continued to see improvement in him. And this incident, along with a few others, supports the idea that exit slips can be used to help students use their voice and take ownership of their learning.

In general, I was very pleased with the outcome of my research on the use of exit slips in the classroom. I hope to continue to use exit slips in my future classroom as I have been able to see many positive effects result from their use. I hope to continue to develop the process of using these slips as I continue to learn more about what current research is finding on the use of exit slips and as I receive more and more feedback and ideas from my students on how to make this practice as effective as possible. Overall I believe the use of exit slips in the classroom is an effective way to help answer students' questions, motivate them to take ownership of their own learning, and provide me, the teacher, with a deeper understanding of how well the students are understanding a certain concept.

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Appendix A

➢ Sample Reflection Questions:

- During this past week, what is one topic that was covered which is still confusing to you? What about this topic is confusing? Please provide a question from your notes or textbook relating to this topic that confuses you.

- Where do you believe you are in your understanding of the content we are currently covering in class? What is one topic you fully understand? What is one topic that you are still struggling to understand? Explain your answers.

Appendix B

➢ Sample Interview Questions:

- How often would you say you filled out the slips on the days when they were optional?

- Why did you choose to either fill out a slip or leave it blank on the optional days?

- How helpful did you find the feedback provided on the slips?

- If the feedback on the slips did help you, can you provide a specific example of when and how?

- Overall, what are your thoughts on the slips being used these past few weeks? Did you think it was good to have the required ones once a week? Would you want this to continue in the classroom?

- Do you have any suggestions on how to improve the slips and implementing them in the classroom?