



# Developing Confidence Through Group Discussion & Reflection

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**Further Information**  
This poster and further information is available at <http://www.theibsc.org/>

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## Introduction

In an effort to increase confidence and positive attitudes in the classroom, the boys in my 12<sup>th</sup> grade Math class participated in a reflective journal activity. This took them away from content and allowed them to get to know one another better. The ultimate goal was to allow them to be more open to challenges they face in the classroom.

## The Research Question

*How might intentional group reflection and discussion affect boys' learning confidence and sense of community within a 12<sup>th</sup> grade Math classroom?*

## Research Context and Participants

Boys' Latin's motto—*Esse Quam Videri*—"To Be Rather Than To Seem"—emphasizes the development of one's integrity, courage and compassion for others and has been the core value of a Boys' Latin education since 1844. The school welcomes young men from diverse backgrounds and educates them in a supportive student-centered environment. A low student-teacher ratio fosters positive relationships, thereby challenging each student to reach his maximum potential while empowering him to mature with an increasing sense of self-worth and an awareness of his responsibilities toward himself and his community.

The participants in my project were the six Grade 12 boys in my College Algebra class. These boys have struggled through their math classes in our Upper School and have been recommended specifically for this course that is remedial in nature. They often lack confidence when it comes to learning mathematics.

## The Research Action

In order to address my students' lack of confidence and motivation in my College Algebra class, I infused a structured discussion period into my classroom instruction. The lesson began with a reading of a response to a journal prompt.

The students then took some time to write some 250 words on the topic, and then we gathered together to share. After each boy spoke on the topic of the day, all class members were required to give feedback on what they heard.



"The best experience in math class was my 9th grade year when I had a big project on creating a cereal box."

"Every summer, I sweat above a griddle, grille, and fryer putting blood, sweat, and tears into making and cooking burgers, chicken tenders, French fries, wraps, and sandwiches just to name a few things."

"My role model was Sean White when I was younger. I would beg my parents to let me snowboard...I wanted to be just like him."



"I see that you are a social leader and that is something that we all need."

"I liked how you talked about something that I can relate to."

"It's fun to let people know about me as it can be hard for me to express my feelings."

## Data Collection and Analysis

- The same survey entitled "Math and Me" was administered before and after the journal exercise period.
- Each journal entry was submitted to me; no grade was given.
- Each session was recorded in full. This recording contained all the journal entries and the reactions of each boy to what was being read aloud.
- Each student created a film in which they recorded their overall impressions of our journal work.

## Key Findings and Discussion

- As the boys shared their stories, they truly **got to know each other**. Taking a break from the daily lessons allowing them to **appreciate each others' stories and strengths**.
- As I looked through my data, I found several examples in which **the boys praise each other**, with statements such as "I liked how you described that" or "I like how you talked about something that I can relate to." One boy remarked "It was cool to hear what inspired you when you were younger."
- Another theme that resonated through our discussion came in the form of **pedagogical suggestions**. On the subject of homework, one boy expressed frustration. "I wish they could incorporate videos and other stuff to make you learn rather than just memorize."
- Survey **results did not yield a significant change in their thoughts towards mathematics** in general. There was, however, a discernible **growth in their willingness to step up to a challenge** in the classroom.

## Conclusions

As I reflect upon my results, it appears as if my students' collective attitude improved as a result of our time in discussion. They became better acquainted with each other, which in turn helped to open lines of communication. The structure of the discussions allowed all to voice encouragement to each other and even to me. Taking in the value of this team building, a possible next step might be, for example, building on classroom community by forming peer review/peer support pairs or groups to tackle math challenges. Taking the time out to appreciate your collaborative team could possible lead to richer overall results.

## Key Readings

Elbers, E. (2003). Classroom interaction as reflection: Learning and teaching mathematics in a community of inquiry. *Educational Studies In Mathematics*,54(1), 77.

Reichert, M., & Hawley, R. A. (2014). *I can learn from you: Boys as relational learners*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Publishing Group.

Toumasis, C. (2003)). Cooperative study teams in mathematics classrooms. September 26.<http://www.physics.emory.edu/faculty/weeks/journal/toumasis04.pdf>



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