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Strategies for Creating an Inclusive Environment in Early Childhood Education

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Abstract

The articles reviewed in this literature review examine key strategies needed to create a positive learning environment and successfully include students with disabilities in an inclusive elementary classroom. Key strategies include relationships, collaboration, providing feedback, the use of visuals and nonverbal communication, accommodations, and understanding a student's perception of school climate. The literature review concluded that creating this type of collaborative environment with strong relationships ultimately has a positive impact on student success in the classroom. Considering the current trend of inclusion in education, it is important to research and develop strategies that support children with disabilities in the classroom.

Keywords: collaboration, relationships, inclusion

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Introduction/Background

Formal education in America has been around since the 17th century. As the original 13 colonies developed, schools that focused on reading, writing, and math were also developed. Since then, the way schools are run has evolved and changed into the standard setting that we see today. There is so much that can influence a student's overall experience in school and the strategies we use can help or hinder a child's success in school. As educational research has developed over the years, there has been a shift towards teaching the whole child. This idea refers to looking out for a child's social emotional health and growth as well as their academic growth. This often presents itself in the form of social emotional learning curricula that are squeezed in among other core subjects, creating the perception that it is an afterthought and not something that needs to be the main focus. The goal of this SEL movement is obviously to create an environment where the child feels valued and supported in a positive way. In the article, *Reflecting on Social Emotional Learning: A Critical Perspective on Trends in the United States*, Hoffman states, "The SEL movement has made a valuable contribution at some level, for it has attempted to raise educators' and policy makers' consciousness of the need for attention to the emotional domain in schooling, if only for instrumental purposes such as achievement and personal success. The goals of fostering students' sense of belonging and attachment to teachers and classmates at school are eminently desirable, and there are indications that some SEL programs can enhance such feelings." I would argue that in the following research articles, the opposite is true. The concept of the whole child goes beyond the idea of a curriculum and encompasses the whole environment that we create for them. We may not even

realize how seemingly small factors like our behavior management, relationships, how the student perceives the school climate, parent involvement, and even the way we set up our classrooms can be an indicator of how successful that student is. Although there is not one thing that will solve every issue or behavior that comes up, there are certain practices that teachers can set in place to ensure that will set them up for success.

What Factors Can Influence a Child's Learning Environment?

Relationships Between Teachers and Students

It is often ingrained in us that relationships are the key to a positive and productive environment. However, this is often easier said than done. Teachers can get overwhelmed by crowded classrooms, new curriculum, and other stressors and often not put in the amount of effort that is needed to create these relationships. One article that I read stated that “according to self system motivational theory (Connell & Wellborn, 1991), poor relationships with teachers thwart children’s basic need for relatedness and diminish children’s feelings of belonging at school and perceived academic competence, thereby obstructing motivational processes that drive academic achievement (Split, 2012).” Children will often live up to our expectations of them, and it is our job to show them that no matter how hard the subject matter is, they can always learn and progress. This article also stated that a few bad relationships does not necessarily hinder a child’s success in school, but if a child consistently has strained relationships with teachers it can be detrimental to their whole school experience. A study in 2007 identified three subgroups of students and their relationships with teachers from preschool to third grade. They found that the TSRQ (teacher student relationship quality) did have a direct effect on success. The students with the highest

success had the highest TSRQ. About 13% of the students experienced a declining relationship quality with teachers over the years, and therefore showed lower academic success. This study, however, was done in a mostly white, affluent school. The purpose of the current study in the article was to predict the trajectory of students who have high quality relationships. Ultimately the study showed that “teacher–student relationships are proximal processes that are significantly associated with children’s long-term growth in academic achievement (Split, 2012).” It is important for teachers to do everything that they can to cultivate positive relationships. Another type of relationship that can affect a child’s success in school is parent/teacher involvement.

Teacher/Parent Relationships

Collaboration between parents and teachers ultimately benefits the students, but parents often require training to develop the skills necessary to form relationships that will be productive. The more information and tools parents have, the more they can effectively collaborate with teachers. Misunderstandings and miscommunications can often lead to strained relationships between parents and teachers when working with students with disabilities. This lack of knowledge can hinder the connections that are made between these parties and affect the quality of education the child receives. From 2002-2005 a university partnered with 10 families to be part of a program that delivered 9 hour training courses giving information about the special education process. The purpose of this study was to provide parents and professionals with information so that they could effectively collaborate and create programs that could benefit children with disabilities. On the opposite spectrum, effective collaboration leads to stronger relationships and will inevitably lead to a better educational experience for the child. Over 1,300 parents and educators participated. The teachers were paired with one family and were given the training. After that training, the participants were then able to go and present what they had

learned to wider audiences of educators and parents.

A survey was given to participants after the training. Over 90% felt that their questions were answered, they had received enough information on the particular topics covered, and were satisfied and would recommend the training to others. Over 80% felt that the tools were relevant and they would be able to implement them and they learned enough to complete the tasks required. Of the participants, 22% said they felt they would be better advocates and 11% said they would use what they learned to help the IEP process. The important lessons learned from this study were to take the time to invest in relationships, do your research before starting, provide support for participants that will eventually be training others and keep the data system that you use simple. "Successful parent-professional partnerships result in improved outcomes for students, but many parents and professionals require training to develop the skills necessary to form effective relationships. Not only was this project successful in addressing the training needs of parents and educators who support students with disabilities, but it also encouraged a positive outlook on future collaboration for many of them." (Bruder, 2007) I really believe that one of the most important things we can do when teaching children with special needs is communicate and form relationships. One way to do this is to make everyone involved with the child part of the education process. The more open you are with parents the more receptive they will be to anything you have to say about their child. They need to feel that you are a partner in this process and that you have the wellbeing of the child at the forefront of all you do. I think that a training like the one presented in this article is a great way to make connections and make sure everyone is on the same page. I also believe that the majority of behaviors that teachers deal with are brought on (most of the time unknowingly) by the teachers themselves. Going through these training sessions with the parents gives the opportunity to create relationships and learn about the individual child, ultimately affecting the students school environment in a positive way. Creating a positive and inclusive environment goes beyond the classroom and extends to the family as well.

Peer support

There is much to be said for peer support in the classroom and its effect on student outcomes. Peer support can come in many forms. It involves placing students in groups and engaging in activities that support academic instruction and social skills. This type of intervention can foster a sense of belonging, support, and bolster overall academic scores. It can involve mixed-age peer support, collaborative learning, and peer modeling. In children with disabilities, peer support has been found to increase friendships, provide greater access to general curriculum, help reach IEP goals, and increase collaboration between staff, students and parents. Interventions that use peers support interventions can potentially replace the paraprofessional model. This peer support refers to one or more peers who do not have disabilities, providing academic or social support to students with a disability. Students providing this support are taught to adapt class activities in order to help provide instruction related to IEP goals, facilitate student participation, provide feedback, implement relevant behavior intervention plans, and further communication between the students. In one study, researchers found that contact, engagement, and interactions were higher when a second peer was also involved. "Our findings indicate that peers can be taught to modify instructional activities effectively and eliminate the disconnect that often exists between the instruction received by the student with severe disabilities and classmates without disabilities in general education classrooms (Carter, 2005)."

Overall, peer support interventions contribute to higher levels of active engagement for students in general, increased social interactions, and decreased levels of problem behavior for students with disabilities. It improved their academic performance and allowed them to work on functional skills. This article focused on the refinement of peer interactions and support, noting the benefits of adding additional support in the form of two or three peers. Allowing students to

have opportunities to strengthen their relationships with their peers has a positive impact on their overall perception of their environment.

Positive Reinforcement

General and Specific Praise

As educators, praise can be a powerful tool and have a dramatic effect on behavior in the classroom. Studies have shown that the use of praise can decrease the amount of problematic behaviors in the classroom. Research has also found that preschoolers are the most likely to be removed from the classroom, or preschool program, because of behavior. This is most likely because preschools are privately operated, there are typically more behaviors present, and there are more children that have not been identified as having certain disabilities. In this particular study the rate of two different kinds of praise across different classroom types of classrooms. The two forms of praise were general praise (GP) and behavior-specific praise (BSP). Preschool teachers were more likely to use GP praise, mostly likely because it is easier to use at the moment and requires less thought. Studies have shown, however, that BSP is generally more effective. Teachers in general, at-risk, and special education classrooms were observed for 10 hours during this study. This study might serve as a tool to inform teachers on these different types of praise and set a standard for how frequently to use it across these different types of classrooms. The purpose of this study was to determine what kind of praise was used most frequently by preschool teachers and in what type of classroom. This helps to evaluate a teacher's natural rate of praise and can help inform future practices. The use of praise can help prevent certain behaviors before they happen. BSP has been proven to be more effective than GP as it identifies the appropriate behavior that you want the student to model. According to Berlinghof, "These results provide insight into what might be expected in terms of preschool teachers' natural use of praise. Results from this study along with additional future

research, may help inform teacher praise intervention and possibly set a recommended standard for how frequently teachers should use praise within general, at-risk, and SPED preschool classrooms (2017).” A classroom with overall higher rates of praise would tend to show higher levels of academic success and lower problem behaviors. This would be a huge factor in creating a positive environment for children to learn in. Specific praise is something that can be used for any student, no matter what their skill level.

Use of Visuals and Non Verbal Communication

The role of a teacher is often thought of as one that stands in front of their students and instructs them. This in turn leads to the dynamic that the teacher or instructor does a great deal, or the majority of talking. While this may seem like a normal classroom experience, there is research that would state that the opposite is true. The use of nonverbal communication in the classroom is very powerful and can set students up for success. Classroom management strategies like Catalyst (formerly ENVoy) rely heavily on the fact that there is often too much direct instruction, sometimes referred to as “verbal clutter,” from the classroom teacher. This classroom strategy focuses on visual and non-verbal communication, minimizing repetitive instructions and empowering students to be independent learners. Children with specific language, communication, and speech needs can greatly benefit from visual strategies. In this study, teachers were given training to help analyze the needs of specific students, adapt curriculum, and utilize visual techniques and strategies to help support learning. In their study, Wellington and Stackhouse state that, “the move towards inclusive education has increased the number of children with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) in mainstream classrooms and the demand to deliver an inclusive curriculum (2011).” Although teachers almost unanimously agreed that visuals greatly support a child’s learning, they often felt ill equipped when it came to implementing them in an inclusive classroom setting. The types of disabilities that may present themselves in the general education classroom can include any

range of needs from children with autism, Down Syndrome, speech or language difficulties, to severe language impairments. The purpose of the study was to see if the same training that was given to speech/language pathologists could provide teachers and TA's with the skills to help support students with these specific needs. It followed the participants' knowledge and skills before and after the training, the practices that were implemented before and after the training, and how the participants felt about the training. Seven schools in Sheffield, New England took part in the study. This study design focused on collaborating with SLT and school-based staff, was gathered from a previous piloted literature review, and the participants were actively involved in the evaluation process. The questions that were asked of them were tied to three different perspectives of data collection. The results showed that through mentoring and training, teachers can become more confident in their use of visual support in the classroom. This proves that the collaboration between teachers is so vitally important, especially between special education and general education. Welling and Stackhouse state that "even experienced teachers do not necessarily have 198 Child Language Teaching and Therapy 27(2) the knowledge and skills to support children with SLCN without specific training, particularly in relation to visual support (2011)." There did end up being a discrepancy between the teacher and the TA's responses. The teachers assistants reported being more knowledgeable than the teachers, but they did not necessarily know how to implement and adapt the curriculum. The TA's also found it easier to implement the visual strategies.

Children who are learning English as a second language also present some different challenges. In an Australian study, five children were observed in their early childhood settings. The study was interesting in seeing how children become part of the social community in school. They may experience a silent period, which can be a way to "catch up" to their English speaking peers. They may use the silence to help tune in to the environment around them, proving that social and communication skills are interrelated. The five participants were observed in their daycare setting which had 41 children and 6 teachers. The languages that the

children spoke at home included Hebrew, Danish, Malaysian, Norwegian, and Korean. After being videotaped, two of the children's behaviors, including nonverbal movement, silence, changed participation, and nonverbal actions were analyzed. The children's behaviors were categorized into observing ongoing activities, becoming involved in activities through teacher initiative, engaging in an activity with a teacher, involvement in play including other children, interrupting participation in activity, and influencing conditions of participation. Both children ended up being able to move towards full participation with their English speaking peers. Kultti states that "the teachers' embodied practice is a part of the community and the structured environment. The analysis showed the importance of professionals' skills in taking the experiences of toddlers as a starting point to understand how they express themselves and can be included in activities (2015)." The study showed the importance of supporting all of our students' experiences, values, and practices, while creating opportunities for them to engage in face-to-face interactions and activities with their English speaking peers. Children have agency over and contribute to their own learning and this is negotiated, renegotiated and constructed through interactions. Leading by modeling and using visual cues is an effective way to help children of all abilities and backgrounds to succeed in the classroom.

Student Perceptions of School Climate

A lot can be said for a student's attitude towards school and how they perceive their environment and how they fit into it. When a student's environment is one that is caring, inclusive, supportive and safe, their academic progress will reflect this. A study by Tallinn University in Estonia, Ruus (2007) states that a "school has the responsibility for a creating favorable climate where students are encouraged to perceive learning tasks as challenges and opportunities for self-improvement, develop constructive coping strategies, where they are supported by teachers if necessary, and feel psychologically and physiologically well." This

study sought to prove that a student's ability to cope and succeed at school was directly related to their perception of the climate they were in. A questionnaire was given to over 3,500 students from 65 schools in Estonia. They could put the results into 4 different clusters. Schools that were unwelcoming and high pressure, schools that were indifferent about student success, schools that were welcoming with high expectations, and schools that had average or normal practice. The overall analysis was that “what we need is a new school culture relying on respect for wisdom, search for truth, human happiness and dignity (Russ, 2007).” All of these strategies help to create a sense of belonging and inclusion. When a child feels these things they are more likely to try their best, feel that they can succeed, and have a positive perception of themselves and their school experience.

Collaboration

Collaboration with Families

One of the most important things that a teacher can do is create relationships and collaborate with families. You are a part of a child's team and are working towards a common goal; the success of the child. It is so important to build a solid relationship with families and foster a sense of community and teamwork. Listening, being open, and respectful are just some of the ways to do this. Especially in early childhood education, this can often be the first experience a family has with working with a disability. It is important to understand where they are coming from and know that emotions may be driving a lot of their thoughts and behaviors. A study of rural school districts reviewed the attitudes towards collaborating with families of children with disabilities. There have been many studies that show that home-school collaboration has a positive impact on student achievement. This study focused on technology and its use in professional developments that encourage collaboration. Collaboration goes

beyond going through the motions of filling out paperwork and making sure that curriculum is taught. It takes effort on the part of the teacher as well as family to participate and maintain a healthy working relationship. In this study, 86 teachers in this school district participated in a PD, filling out a survey prior to and after the program. This was year one of the study. In year two, 16 of the 86 original participants took the survey again. Individual interviews were also conducted to gather data on how these teachers collaborated and used what they had learned. As this data was being analyzed, two themes emerged. Parents are the experts on their children, and staying calm when being confronted with a demanding or confrontational parent. The researchers stated that, “the overall goal of the professional development was to boost teachers’ awareness of the value of engaging with parents of students with disabilities. Initial results showed that teacher ratings of the importance of collaboration with parents had indeed increased (Collier, 2017).” Another common theme that came up in the research was listening to families. Because listening can be so subjective, further research might be done on the different types of listening that teachers engage in when working with families.

Collaboration Between General Ed/SPED Teachers

Because there is a push for inclusion in education, general education teachers and special education teachers both have a responsibility for educating every diverse learner. It is important for both types of teachers to have mutual respect, common goals, and be willing to participate in this kind of collaborative work. In this article, the authors addressed the need for time to collaborate and the ability to effectively manage that time. One way to do this is through the use of established-process meetings. This meeting should have a specific agenda, with specific outcomes in mind. Another theme that arose in the article was one of a gap in content knowledge. “Although pre service candidates expressed hope through a “willing[ness] to learn from each others” and

appeared open to learning and implementing new practices, preservice special education teachers talked about feeling unprepared on content-specific knowledge (Da Faunte, 2017).” Like special education teachers, general educators had their qualms as well. They often felt like they lacked knowledge of specific disabilities and IEP protocols. One positive is that teachers can merge their specific knowledge to help further student success and open up new ways to collaborate across content areas.

Fact sheets can be a way to help bridge this content knowledge gap. Special education teachers can create a quick reference guide or disability fact sheet for general education teachers to reference. Similarly, general education staff can create a content area fact sheet for SPED teachers with superficial outlined content knowledge, standards, and scope-and-sequence.

Communication is also key in collaboration. Some strategies that might be useful include developing positive relationships and taking time to learn the language that is specific to each role. Listening and conflict resolution are also skills that should be used when working together.

No teacher should have to “go it alone,” and should be able to lean on and use the knowledge of their colleagues. “Collaboration should take into account that all team members should demonstrate strong communication skills, the ability to share knowledge, and willingness to find the time to support teamwork where all members are responsible and accountable (Da Faunte, 2017).”

Collaboration With Paraprofessionals

The role of a paraprofessional in a special education classroom is extremely important and valuable. They are a constant source of help and support in the classroom and are an integral part of a child's team. The relationship between paraprofessionals and teachers plays a major part in the daily functioning of the classroom and can greatly impact the way students learn. It is important to be on the same page with paras and know that you are both striving for a common goal; the success of the student(s) that you are serving. Effective communication and teacher-para relationships can also have a positive impact on behaviors. “ Both teachers and paraprofessionals tend to view collaborative relationships as professionally beneficial because they can result in increased self-efficacy, professional support, and opportunities for professional growth (Barnes, 2021).” On the other hand, when these boundaries and relationships are not set in place, the functioning of a classroom can suffer. Lack of collaboration can also lead to high turnover rates of paras. In this article, some effective strategies were shared to help further collaboration in the classroom. The three main ideas were solidarity, clarity of roles, and respect. Solidarity references using language like “we,” deferring, active listening, teamwork, and rapport. Administrative involvement, consistent communication, training, and role division all help to clarify the roles of each adult. Lastly, having respect is of utmost importance. “By engaging in best practices to create a solid classroom team, clarifying roles in the classroom, and encouraging respectful interactions between teachers and paraprofessionals, it is possible to build and maintain positive and productive working environments that benefit everyone in the self-contained classroom (Barnes, 2021).”

Classroom Environment

Quality of Classrooms

The purpose of this study was to evaluate programs for EBD students, and create a valid tool for staff to use to continue to monitor their programs. This would prove helpful in that school administration would be able to use these results to assist in the improvement of these programs. This has the potential to be an efficient approach for any school in making future decisions about these programs. Based on ratings of a panel of experts in EBD, will those participants agree that the indicators in the PEER-EBD are adequately detailed. They also looked to see if they provide a high level of content validity when used as a tool to evaluate EBD programs. When given a set of practices and indicators as validated by this panel, is there a level of internal consistency when individuals use the PEER-EBD evaluation. They also looked to see if there were any discrepancies between the results of the PEER-EBD.

Again in these articles, I am finding that the environment has a great effect on the success of SPED students and there are many factors that come into play when considering how to create an inclusive classroom. However, these are things that are typically taught to SPED teachers specifically and not often covered in general education. I feel that SPED students who spend time in the general education classroom would benefit more if the general education teacher was given some of these tools. This would definitely help in creating an environment to help students succeed.

Mastery Goal Climate

Mastery goal climate is one that, as the name says, focuses on mastering a specific skill. Students in this type of environment are motivated and engaged and willing to work to accomplish this goal. Theory assumes that the environment is a factor in a student's motivation, not just a student's personal disposition. In their study, Patrick, Ryan and Kaplan (2011) said that "we propose that the classroom achievement goal structure is manifested primarily in the

quality of social relationships with the teacher and among students and therefore that it is highly intertwined with, if not inseparable from, the classroom's social climate." Creating this type of environment in the classroom would definitely have a positive effect on student outcomes. I feel that it would foster a sense of intrinsic motivation that would drive students to want to learn.

Theory of Mind Development

Part of creating an inclusive classroom is helping students interact socially. This study was conducted to determine if there was any correlation between mind development in children with intellectual disability and the type of classroom they were in. Having mild intellectual disabilities can be a diverse disorder because of the varying issues it can cause. There are, however, widespread assumptions that can be made regarding these children. Most children with intellectual disability struggle with common social interactions with their peers and can demonstrate antisocial behavior. It has also been shown that these students also have trouble understanding their peers' beliefs, mental states, and their perspectives. These abilities are often attributed to theory of mind development. Theory of mind development (ToM) is the ability to understand and recognize different mental states in others and use that information to make predictions about their behavior and reactions. In this study the authors turn to the development of children with intellectual disabilities in the context of an inclusive classroom. In this classroom, these students are learning alongside their typically developing peers as opposed to a self contained classroom environment. There have been studies that have proven the cognitive and social benefits of inclusive classrooms. There is, however, a lack of data supporting the connection between inclusion and ToM development in children with intellectual disabilities. This study in this article examined the difference in ToM development in students with mild intellectual disabilities when placed in an inclusive classroom as opposed to a special education room. Random schools throughout Poland were invited to participate in this study and included children from various regions. The participants consisted of 166 elementary aged

children, 79 of whom were placed in inclusive classrooms. The remaining 87 remained in special education classrooms. This article stated that “even though the results were not strong...it shows a significance of the classroom environment for ToM development. It is important because there is very little research showing the role of social factors for ToM development among children with intellectual disabilities, and according to our best knowledge, there is no research on the significance of the classroom environment for ToM development among children with mild intellectual disabilities.” (Szumski, 2019) This directly shows how the classroom environment can affect how a child thinks and can ultimately alter their brain development. This would be a very large factor in how well the child is doing academically.

Accommodations

Students with disabilities often require accommodations in the classroom to help meet their needs. It can be hard to know how to implement these accommodations effectively in the classroom. In this study, scientific basis was reviewed to help further research and inform practice regarding accommodations and services provided to students with EBD and ADHD. They found and reviewed articles referencing accommodations and supports that were provided and found 149 strategies used. They then narrowed those strategies down to ones that pertained to children with EBD and ADHD. The strategies and accommodations were then vetted through certain criteria as to whether or not they were effective. To be considered an accommodation the strategy must be a change in school practice, touch on grade level academic content standards, and mediate the impact of the disability. The first to be reviewed was choice making. Across all areas, engagement, productivity, and accuracy increased when choices were given. Another accommodation that was studied was interest. This could be as simple as creating a problem or worksheet with cars on it, if the child is interested in cars. Intratask stimulation was also reviewed as a potential accommodation. This is seen in using a highlighter to mark potentially important words when reading a text. Another accommodation

was fast paced instruction, where content is presented in a quick manner with little wait time. This is done with the intention that there would be little time between content instruction for disruptive behaviors. Other accommodations that were reviewed were small group instruction, adaptive furniture, shortened task length, extended time, and opportunities to respond.

Many of the accommodations reviewed did not meet the criteria even though they are often recommended in school settings. "Accommodations are being recommended without any evidence of effectiveness. This approach costs students in terms of their potential long-term outcomes, costs teachers' effort and time providing services unlikely to work, and costs districts and communities the resources used to provide these strategies (Harrison, 2013)"

Gaps and Limitations

A common gap that I found in these studies was that the sample sizes are not very diverse. They don't take into account very many populations that have a variety of ethnicities or socioeconomic backgrounds. There were also several studies that specifically stated that the sample size that they used was small. This was the case with the study about the quality of EBD classrooms. One of the first problems with the study is that the sample size is too small. It was stated that the ratio of participants to parameters should be at least 10:1. This would mean that the study should have had a minimum of 440 participants, but it only had 145. Although staff could voice their opinion with how the system was operated, many said that they did not fully understand the best practices being talked about or understand the indicators of the study.

Another gap that presented itself was in relation to peer support. It was found that there were really no efforts made by school staff to equalize the behaviors provided by each peer that was supporting the SPED student. They also pointed out that the social interactions that were measured did not distinguish among the contributions of each student. This includes initiations and responses. It also did not distinguish among the content of those interactions. It was found that the majority of the students' interactions were related to academics. It was suggested that

future studies extend the analyses to include additional social outcomes. This could include reciprocity in interactions and the exchange of social support behaviors. The study also would have benefited by a more direct assessment of the academic progress that was made. If the study was done over a longer period of time and not rushed, they may be able to go in depth and use test performance, IEP goals, assignment completion, and overall grades to measure academic performance.

Another gap that was found was in the study of collaboration in SPED. This study based its results on a survey given at the end of the training. They were overwhelmingly positive. It would be interesting to follow up and see how their parents felt a few months after the training or even at the end of the year. Were they able to use the knowledge that they said they gained to collaborate with the child's teacher and how did the child benefit? Only 53% of the participants returned their data forms after the training. The majority of the participants were caucasian, which also makes me question a lot about the study. In regards to collaborating with families, a gap exists merely because of the fact that building and maintaining relationships with families is an ongoing, difficult process.

Future Research

The correlation between the classroom environment and social climate and student success is strong. However, it is so nuanced and individual to each specific school, that it needs to continue to be researched. I would be very interested to see some of these studies done today, post COVID to see how a student's environment affects their learning. I believe that there is already some evidence that being out of the classroom and out of the normal school environment (no matter how positive) has had a negative impact on students' academic performance.

I feel that much needs to be done in regards to researching accommodations in the classroom. These strategies that are often suggested to teachers to use as accommodations might be more effective in a UDL(universal design for learning) setting. It would be interesting to see the difference between a classroom that was just implementing the accommodations and one that was using them within a UDL.

Conclusion/Implications

A positive and inclusive classroom can lead to many things including higher attendance, lower teacher turnover, higher academic performance, and the promotion of a student's overall wellbeing. There are so many factors that contribute to a child's environment and what they feel when they are in school. Through many of these studies, it can be concluded that a positive view of their environment correlates positively with their academic performance. Although there are many more strategies that could be considered part of creating an inclusive environment, I feel that these are the most important elements to have set in place. As educators it is important that we are aware of our contributions to the overall environment we create and how it affects our students. Adding to this challenge, is the fact that every student may relate and perceive something different when they are in our classroom. Through these research articles, I have learned that we have great power in creating a positive classroom environment to bolster student success, yet more research needs to be done to better understand the correlation between the two.

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