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Sit With Us: Benefits of Inclusion

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Abstract

The focus of this Capstone project is on understanding the benefits of an inclusive classroom setting. This is important because, there is a stigma that special education students hinder the learning of general education students, but the data provided in this paper will show otherwise. The primary stakeholders perspectives that were surveyed were three special education educators familiarized with an inclusive setting, one being a teacher and the other two teacher aides. Three ways to improve inclusion include co-teaching, increased training, and using technology to assist students. Based on the findings collected from the interviews and research formulated in this paper, an action to reach out to parents/guardians was undertaken to increase the knowledge of inclusion.

Keywords: inclusion, co-teaching, increased training, technology, special education, general education

Setting the Stage

Roughly two years ago, during my first service learning class at CSUMB, I witnessed a form of segregation implemented in the Mild to Moderate Special Education (SPED) classroom in which I was observing. The SPED classroom was grades Kindergarten through Second (K-2) and had a total of 8 students. Given that the children varied in temperament and educational standing there were two teacher aides working alongside the teacher.

The teacher mentioned that they rarely receive service learners willing to assist their classroom and was thrilled I would be helping for the entire semester. She then assigned me to work with one specific student to give him better one on one interaction and learning, something he was not receiving too much of because they could not accommodate to every individual all at once. He was in second grade, with hopes that he would transition back into general education within the near future. He was a bright student and opened up to me quite quickly, which grew his confidence in me. I was hesitant with how to work with him especially since I had no prior experience with how to educate a child with a learning disability. It did not take me too long to realize that the similarity to teaching a general education student was not far off, it just simply takes patience and specific teaching approaches.

Every Tuesday and Thursday we would take the students into the computer room to work on a math system that was universal to all children in the school. This meant the SPED students from our class would share the space with a general education classroom. From first glance, it seemed as a way to "integrate" the children which generally is a good idea to release the stigma that special education children cannot work amongst general education students, but that was not the case in this situation. The teacher promptly explained to me that our students were only joining them because it was the only time the class schedule allowed for all 8 students to work on

the application as a class. Again, with my lack of understanding special education, I was a little confused as to why she would feel the need to address the "sharing" of the space.

It was not until I seen the demeanor the general education students, as well as from their teacher, that I became aware that our students being in there seemed to be a bother to them. Some students would not mind sitting next to one of the SPED students, while others would make it known that they were bothered. My teacher, already being aware of this behavior, would try and assign the SPED students seats based off of the least amount of backlash from the other students. The atmosphere would always change once we would walk in the room, and it was not necessarily positive. The idea that this type of collaboration would cause less of an uncomfortable interaction between the general students and the SPED students was nonexistent, rather they were still segregated as an unwanted group. It was very uncomfortable to me and so I knew that it must have been even worse for our students, given that they were the ones being looked at as "different".

I called upon my instincts and spoke with my student to see how he felt about computer class days. I generalized the question as to not push the idea that it was a negative day, because of course of he had not noticed or been bothered by the interaction then I would not interfere with his interpretation. His answer on the other hand was not what I was expecting, because it was worse. His response was, "I hate computer days because the kids in there think we're stupid." I was shocked to say the least, but I listened as he explained further that during lunch a couple of students from the general education class are aware that they are special education, therefore claiming that they are not "normal". This is something that has completely shifted my idea about Special Education, and the importance to normalize their education experiences as well as to introduce this notion to general education students and their teachers.

Students, both general and special education, have to stop being seen as two completely different groups of people. Of course there are differences in their learning abilities, but it is not something we should continue to remind them or those outside of the special education spectrum. Children, like the student I had the privilege to work with, have feelings and understandings of who they are and how they differ in the eyes of society. Therefore, this is a stigma we need to change, for the sake of their well being. Children harbor their experiences for the rest of their life, especially those who are constantly shamed for what they cannot control. If the idea of combining and integrating the students is implemented sooner and with an open minded environment provided by the educators, the children will begin to feel the atmosphere as normalized rather than uncomfortable. This will lead to a more united educational experience for all.

Literature Synthesis and Integration

Introduction

Thoughts on combining general education with special education continues to vary within the education system. This derives from lack of teacher preparation, unwillingness to accommodate, and the ignorance of disabilities in general. The average combating assumptions of inclusion stand between the thought that special education students will hinder general education students, to thoughts that it greatly benefits all students equally. Both ideas will be mentioned within this paper, using studies as background evidence. This paper will also focus on how to approach different implementations and improvements of inclusive classrooms.

What is the Issue?

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 introduced the significance of the inclusion of students with disabilities to both general and special education teachers. Following

the establishment of NCLB, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act

(IDEIA) of 2004 also encouraged the inclusion of exceptional and diverse learners in the

classroom (Ross-Hill, 2009). Although both of these laws began the introduction to the

importance of desegregating special education students, some stakeholders are still unaware of

the benefits of inclusive classrooms. A theory by Lev Vygotsky mentions the importance of

social interaction in connection to the development of a student's cognition. This being seen as a

way to further emphasize the fact that the interaction presented in an inclusive setting is

beneficial for both a general and special education student's development (Daniels, 2009).

Based on a review of literature, the inability to accommodate and transition special education

students into a general education classroom is reflected from lack of teacher preparation.

According to MacFarlane and Woolfson (2013), many general education teachers feel that the

implementation of special education students is problematic. This idea originates from their

beliefs that the children's learning would be "compromised." Avramidis and Norwich (2010)

state that teacher's attitudes and beliefs about inclusion are critical when committing to

efficiently implement the practice. The lack of knowledge of special education and disabilities

alone is what causes the negative stigma against students with special needs, causing them to

become segregated and shunned. According to Antonak and Livneh (2009), while attitudes

toward disabilities has changed, the negativity towards people with disabilities is what causes

obstacles in their life while hindering their life goals.

Why is it an Issue?

Teacher efficacy is what determines their behavior, attitudes, and dedication towards

adverse conditions in the classroom. Many teachers with low self efficacy feel they are

inadequate to provide proper assistance to student achievement, especially in special education

(Paneque & Barbetta, 2010). A study done by Pearman, Huang, Barnahart, and Mellblom (1992) concluded that general education teachers differed significantly from special education teachers in their positive attitudes focused on inclusive classrooms (Jobe, Rust, & Brissie, 1996). Burke & Sutherland (2004) further explained that regular education teachers remain apprehensive because of the lack of in-service experience. Therefore, leading to the conclusion that regular education teachers need to be trained sufficiently before the inclusion process can take place (Ross-Hill, (2009).

The idea of inclusion is supported with the hopes that it not only provides diversity in the classroom, but academically improves test scores for both general and sped students. After surveying educators, the results concluded that while 36% of general education students' test scores increased, another 33% claimed that there was no beneficial change (Idol, 2006). This statistic is combated with the data that is found in other studies focused on the success of solely sped students. For example, a student performance study showed conclusive evidence that students with disabilities included in general education classrooms scored higher in multiple subjects (Rea, McLaughlin, & Walther-Thomas, 2002). Another study taken at Creekside Elementary School showed similar results confirming that upon implementing an inclusive program, students with disabilities scored 58% higher in math and 69% in reading (McLeskey, Waldron, & Redd, 2012).

Table 2. Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT): Percentage of Students Meeting Proficiency Criterion (Level 3 or Higher) in Reading and Math for 2008–2009.

	CES		District		State	
Group	Reading (%)	Math (%)	Reading (%)	Math (%)	Reading (%)	Math (%)
All Students	85	86	70	70	71	74
Students w/	69	58	32	36	33	38

disabilities						
Students from high poverty backgrounds	73	70	45	47	51	56

Note. From "A case study of a highly effective, inclusive elementary school" by McLeskey,Waldron, & Redd (2014), Journal of Special Education, *48*(1), p. 61.

What Should be Done?

A recommended approach to easier transition into inclusive classrooms is through collaborative models and co-teaching. Within an inclusive setting, a special education teacher will work alongside a general education teacher proving any needed support for the students with disabilities, to prevent any need for leaving the classroom for specialized assistance (Solis, Vaughn, Swanson, & Mcculley, 2012). According to Hunt, Soto, Maier, & Doering (2003), a considerable amount of literature found that effective inclusive education for children with disabilities begins with substantive changes in the classroom as well as a continuous need for collaborative teaming. An example is a study of this collaborative teaming, which consisted of not only a general education and special education teacher in one classroom but also the child's parents and an instructional assistant assigned to each classroom (Hunt, et al., 2003). Given that this method needs a substantial amount of effort from multiple people, a drawback is seen on the collaborative approach. This is because of the extra effort required to plan and collaborate, the need for flexibility/versatility, and requiring the ability to compromise (Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2007).

In order to provide effective inclusive education to both general education students and especially special education students, teachers need to be properly prepared and trained. As stated by Hammond & Ingalls (2003), regular education teachers reported that they became aware that they were ill prepared to teach students with academic and social skills problems

(Ross-Hill, 2009). Avramidis & Norwich (2010) further explain this idea stating that many general education teachers' attitudes towards inclusion were reflected from their skepticism in their own instructional knowledge as well as the quality of the support provided to them. According studies done by Detres and Snowden, they concluded that in order to better understand inclusion and its impact on children with special needs, it is imperative that educators receive more training on the subject (Ross-Hill, 2009).

Technology is such a powerful growing platform because it is universal, especially in an educational setting. Assistive technology (AT) is said to be one of the greatest methods for education and inclusion of students with disabilities in terms of facilitating the ability for the students to demonstrate understanding and promoting access to the general curriculum (Michaels & McDermott, 2003). In a study where students used an iOS device to read along with as well as having the device read words aloud was positive because it kept them engaged. Student feedback was based off the acknowledgement that while not all can read, the device was still a great tool in implementing confidence for those who needed the extra assistance (Campigotto, Mcewen, Demmans Epp, 2013). With proper implementation of AT, the growing confidence in students with disabilities can help promote higher participation in home, school and community environments that will also enhance their way of life (Michaels & McDermott, 2003). One downfall to this method is the technical issues that may arise on occasion, such as speed of application or slow downloading which can hinder student engagement and focus (Campigotto, et al., 2013).

Conclusion

There will always be conflicting opinion when trying to determine the most beneficial educational environment for both general and special education. Therefore when thinking about

combining the two, the notions widely vary. This derives from misunderstanding disabilities as a whole, lack of teacher preparation, and unwillingness to accommodate. Studies have shown to break the stigma on students with disabilities, providing enough evidence that when implemented properly, inclusion can in fact work.

Method

For this Capstone Project the researcher will investigate how Amanda Carter[1] (Preschool teacher) views the inclusion of SPED students in a general education classroom and what she thinks could be done to improve it. After interviewing Mrs. Carter, the researchers will use what they have learned to incorporate the inclusion of SPED students in a general education classroom. This is important because it gives the children an introduction to diversity, while releasing the children with disabilities from living within the stigma that they cannot learn and thrive alongside children receiving general education.

Context

The Special Education Preschool classroom used to collect data for this paper is ran through Oceanview Unified School District (OUSD). Oceanview, CA is home to about 15,365 people. Within this number of residents 75% of the population is Caucasian leaving only 11% Hispanic, 4% mixed races and even smaller percentage of African American, and Native Americans (City-Data, 2017). The preschool is an early learning together program, meaning some children may or may not have disabilities which does not hinder their placement in the program. The age range of the children currently in the classroom is three and four, but given that it is special education, the children welcome can be as old as six years. The classroom consists of 10 students, half are general education and the other half are special education.

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[1] All names mentioned in the research are pseudonyms.

The structure of the classroom is play based meaning there are puzzles, magnetic blocks, a section for imaginary play, and circle time area. There is a table used for both academic based activities as well as snack/lunch. Connected to the classroom is a very important area called the therapy room where the children can play. The therapy room is built to accommodate their different stimuli, consisting of a ball pit, bean bags, a therapy swing, and sensory blocks. Dysregulation is very constant and normal with many of the children, therefore the room serves a safe space to relieve the students of overstimulation. Behind the classroom outside there is a playground specifically for the preschoolers. There are tricycles the children can ride along a bike path as well as a jungle gym sitting in sand, and a play house.

Participants and Participant Selection

Three participants were used to conduct this study, first is a white female named Amanda Carter. She is originally from the Santana, CA area but moved to Monteclara, CA because she preferred the demographic environment over the urban area which she was living in prior. Mrs. Carter is a Special Education Preschool teacher who got her teaching credential through the state of California. Her certification allows her to work with students ages birth through five. She has been teaching for a little over 10 years, and has been at the program for about five years now.

The second participant is a white female named Angela Kilby, an aide in Mrs. Carter's classroom. She began working in the preschool through a company that provides instructional support for students in the classroom two years ago. Given that her position was only as an instructional support staff, she knew she wanted to obtain a more permanent position in the classroom. During those two years she studied to get her special education teacher's aide certification at Monteclara Peninsula College. Upon receiving her certification, it then qualified her to apply for a full time position in the preschool through OUSD.

The third participant is a Mexican female named Carmen Sandoval, who is also an aide in Mrs. Carter's class. She studied early childhood education at Oceanview Community College. She was hired as a teacher's aide in the classroom 4 years ago. She had not studied special education but was offered the position because they were in dire need for an aide in the classroom. She admitted that she was skeptical about working with special education students because she only studied to work with general education, but ended up enjoying it therefore why she remains with her position at the preschool.

Researcher

- How and why is the concern personally meaningful to you?

This concern is meaningful to me because I want to help positively impact children with disabilities in the classroom while giving them a more "normalized" education.

- What experiences, background knowledge, and personal qualities, skills, and/or talents qualify you to carry out this project?

I have worked in two special education classrooms prior to this project. The first classroom was mild/moderate and the most recent is moderate/severe. I have seen how the children interact amongst themselves both (Gen Ed) and (SPED) and seen how the social balance is good for their growth and confidence.

- We all have biases; the most insidious are those of which we are unaware or unacknowledged. What makes you different from the "targets" and "influentials?" Is it race, ethnicity, social class, education, work experience, physical or mental ability, gender identity, sexual orientation, etc? How might these differences impact both your perspectives and work on the concern?

What I believe makes me different is my ethnicity. I am Mexican American, a minority, therefore I have experienced my own form of segregation amongst those of the majority. The

same could be said for children with disabilities who are often shamed and made feel "less" or

"different" in a negative way in comparison to general education students. The feeling of being

separate from others is not a good one. I know that with my past experiences, and what

knowledge I have gained in the education field, I can positively impact a special education

student's life by helping them embrace who they are despite their differences, while knowing

they are welcome in any classroom setting or group.

Semi-Structured Interview and Survey Questions

1. What methods do you feel would best incorporate SPED students into a general education classroom?

2. Do you feel that teachers are adequately trained and are there ways in which teacher training could be changed in order to improve the ways in which they implement an inclusive classroom model?

3. What are some challenges or barriers to creating an inclusive classroom?

4. What are your thoughts on co-teaching in an inclusive classroom?

5. Do you think that technology would be a useful in an inclusive classroom and if so, what ways do you think technology could be implemented in an inclusive classroom?

6. Do you feel that there are negative stigmas about SPED students and are there ways in which you feel those stigmas could be changed?

7. What is currently being done to improve the inclusion of SPED students in a general education classroom - by whom - and what do you think about these efforts? Why?

8. What do you think are the obstacles/drawbacks/disadvantages to including students with special needs in general education classrooms?

9. Is there anything else that you would like to say about Inclusion Classrooms and/or the improvement of Inclusion Classrooms?

Procedure

The procedure used to obtain the information needed for this study began with searching for the proper setting. The researchers chose to look at classrooms where the children are already in an inclusive type setting. Upon finding the classroom, the teacher was contacted in person and introduced to what the subject of the study was. Further explaining what type of research was being conducted, how the researchers will be conducting the research, number of interviews as well as length, and the privacy policy which would be held for all participants. Once agreed, contact information was exchanged in order to set up dates and times for interviews. Each interview was held in person as well as individually to be able to connect one-on-one with each participant. Upon conducting all three interviews, the data was collected and combined to properly differentiate each point of view on the notion of inclusion classrooms.

Data Analysis

The researchers looked for similarities that were positive and in agreement of the issue. Constant agreement between interviewees was important otherwise the data would be discredited. When analysis of the data was complete and it was determined that similarities had been found, the proposal for the implementation of the action commenced.

<div align="center">

Results

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Using the results gathered from the interviews conducted at the Special Education Preschool with inclusive classroom professionals, my partner and I created Table 1. The table is organized by three options (Parent Involvement, Administrative Support, and Teacher Conduct) that could improve an inclusive classroom. The three options are evaluated using three different criteria (Time, Resources, and Impact). Based on the evaluation of each Action Option an action will be recommended and justified.

Evaluation of Action Options

	Eval Criteria 1:Time	Eval Criteria 2: Resources	Eval Criteria 3:Impact
Option 1: Parent Involvement	Medium	Low	High
Option 2: Administrative Support	Medium	High	High
Option 3: Teacher Conduct	Low	Low	High

Parent Involvement. (Time to implement/Resources needed/Impact)

The three educators interviewed all felt that parent involvement is an important first step toward a successful inclusion program (Carter, Kilby, Sandoval, personal communication, November 6, 2017). A child's success in the classroom can be predicated on the involvement of their parents or guardians. Whether a child has a disability or not, a parent's understanding of various methods that benefit their child academically increases the likelihood of having an open mindset. The educators we interviewed all agreed that parents who are involved in their child's education, puts a positive relationship with the teachers (Carter, et al., personal communication, November 6, 2017). They, for example, have each parent's number and are constantly in communication about the child's daily routine. Of course this is only speaking for the special education students they teach, but they felt strongly that some type of bond be created between teachers and parents. This being that whether it is special or general education, having that connection will release them of any boundaries that can hinder any progressive notions such as inclusion. More specifically, Mrs. Carter felt in order for students to be safe the parents have to feel safe (A. Carter, personal communication, November 6, 2017). Communication, in her opinion, is the foundation for a healthy classroom setting.

Administrative Support. (Time to implement/Resources needed/Impact)

The educators interviewed agreed that without administrative support, the program would not be successful. The reason that administrative support is so important for an inclusive program is because the entirety of the program begins with those that have the most authority. The head director within the district of the school we interviewed, for example, was in complete agreement with inclusion and the benefits it brings to all students (A. Carter, personal communication, November 6, 2017). Being special education teachers in a district that is already in favor of such a program leaves them more time to focus on maintaining a successful inclusive classroom rather than trying to attain one.
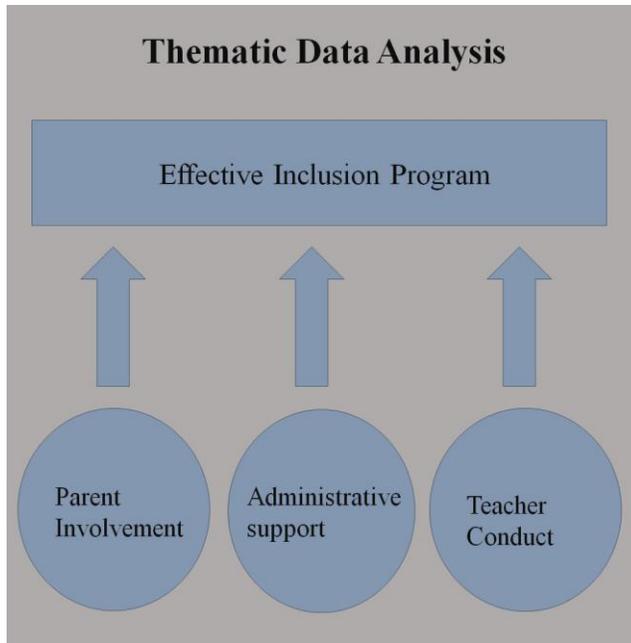
Mrs. Sandoval has prior experience working as a teacher aide in a program that was unsupportive of inclusion. The school system was strictly based off of traditional teaching methods that choose to separate special from general education. The director felt that inclusion would favor one population over the other (either special or general education), and that separating the two populations would better meet the needs of each student. For herself, at the time, this is was not necessarily something she looked too much into because she had not studied to work with special education students. She mentioned that this is why focusing on general education is such a norm within teachers who never even look in the direction of special education, but feels it is something that should be changed. Ms. Sandoval noted that teachers should focus on teaching all students, both general and special education, because there is always going to be a chance that they will need to meet the needs of students with (C. Sandoval, personal communication, November 6, 2017). Not every teacher needs to feel obligated to go into the special education field, but being introduced to it especially by superiors, opens doors to better educating their diverse group of students. She stated that if it weren't for the support from

the director, as well as her colleagues, she would not have the ideas on inclusion that she has today (C. Sandoval, personal communication, November 6, 2017).

Teacher Conduct. (Time to implement/Resources needed/Impact)

Mrs. Carter stated that all the educators in the classroom treat each others as equals (A. Carter, personal communication, November 6, 2017). Mrs. Kilby and Mrs. Sandoval are both teacher aides, one having more certification than the other. Despite these differences in educational background, they all give one another the same opportunity to teach the children. They all respected one another as equals and were very collaborative, consistently communicating about what should be done within the class. This is what all three interviewers explained was the foundation to the success in their classroom. They continued this idea further explaining that in order for an inclusive classroom to work, every teacher involved needs to come to some consensus (Carter, et al., personal communication, November 6, 2017). These educators used their experience as an example, noting that each educator knows what the the other wants, they took each step further in respect to one another's wishes that they have already learned from working with each other. When the teachers are cooperative and a routine is built, the teachers are better able to implement the lesson plans and effectively educate all students in the classroom. For inclusion to work, the teachers need to be in sync and understanding of each and every idea they provide.
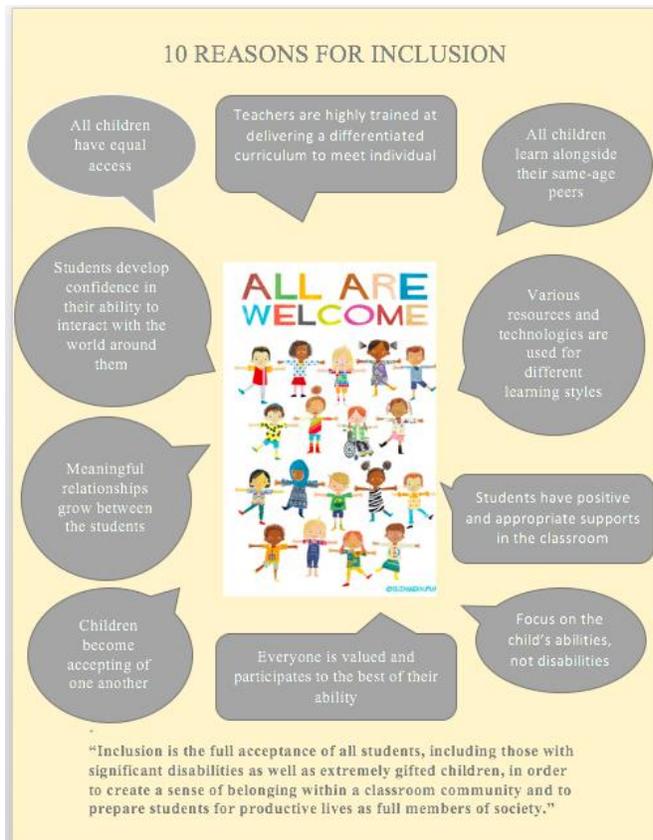
(Refer to diagram below)

Thematic Data Analysis

Effective Inclusion Program

Parent Involvement

Administrative support

Teacher Conduct

Conclusion

This section will justify the action my partner and I recommend to improve parents and guardian's knowledge of inclusion. We will also discuss some of the concessions, limitations, and possible negative outcomes of the recommendation. The authors of this study recommend that a flyer be created and used to educate the community about inclusion of special education students in a general education classroom. A potential negative outcome could be that community members do not agree with the information provided and their point of view on inclusion remains unchanged. The limitations of inclusion are that teachers and parents also have to recognize the fact that this program is not for every child. There are circumstances that will do nothing but hinder the child rather than benefit them, because a special education student might have different needs that need to be filled if they are going to progress in an inclusive setting. The limitations in this study would be the faculty and students that were used to collect data. Further acknowledging that the students and teachers used in this study were restricted to only one preschool classroom. The school in which this study was conducted was a public school, and

the classroom itself was an inclusive classroom. The results of this study may have been different

if the schools used were both public and private. It is possible that an inclusive program in a

private school setting could have resulted differently than those in a public school. A teacher's

point of view and judgement can bring new observations and data to light, possibly changing the

school districts and various counties' perspectives on inclusive classrooms. SPED students can

ultimately be given a better opportunity to learn and grow, leading to greater freedom as well as

opportunities.

Action Documentation and Reflection

The goal of the action in this paper was to introduce and educate community members on

the benefits of inclusive classrooms. In order to achieve this, the researchers met in person with

numerous people at the local community center located in Oceanview, Ca. We stood outside of

the building giving parents and guardians the choice to listen or not. We made sure to not come

on too strong or overbearing, rather conversational and approachable. Flyers were created before

hand to pass out to those who wanted more information on the topic. The flyer had a definition

of inclusion as well as 10 reasons as to why it is beneficial to all students, both general and

special education (See flyer below). We then explained why we were promoting the notion for

inclusion and answered any questions the parents/guardians had.

10 REASONS FOR INCLUSION

All children have equal access

Teachers are highly trained at delivering a differentiated curriculum to meet individual

All children learn alongside their same-age peers

Students develop confidence in their ability to interact with the world around them

Various resources and technologies are used for different learning styles

Meaningful relationships grow between the students

Students have positive and appropriate supports in the classroom

Children become accepting of one another

Everyone is valued and participates to the best of their ability

Focus on the child's abilities, not disabilities

"Inclusion is the full acceptance of all students, including those with significant disabilities as well as extremely gifted children, in order to create a sense of belonging within a classroom community and to prepare students for productive lives as full members of society."

In order to address the proper information we reviewed the information that was presented within our paper and synthesized the information onto a google document. The decision to make a flyer was based off the most approachable way to give people information without the person receiving it feeling as if they were demanded to listen. We collaborated both together and individually to create a flyer with the most basic information that best illustrated why inclusion can benefit their children. The changes we needed to make had to fit both parties. We made a concerted effort to remain unbiased and focused on presenting the relevant information.

The majority of the responses we received were uplifting and positive, which is what we were hoping for when planning our action. The parents/guardians were open to listening and were very interactive with us, asking questions and giving their opinions. On the other hand, we

did come across a couple parents who were not willing to listen. Some were very stuck in their

own mindset which followed the traditional education system (separating general and special

education). This was already expected because we knew we would have to face people who were

not going to be supportive of the idea. Therefore, we listened to their ideas and based off of their

responses, we answered any questions that were focused solely on their concerns. This approach

was in hopes that we could further educate the parents giving them enough knowledge that

would instill a positive change that they would make on their own.

What we wish we would have known prior to the research for this paper was that the

drive for inclusion is a lot more on the rise within the educational system than expected. With the

advancements in technology and more parents being educated on the multiple disabilities ranging

from mild, moderate to severe, the idea about special education is not so taboo these days.

People such as parents, teachers and some school board members have already taken initiative to

promote the notion of inclusion because of the positive outcomes seen within inclusion

classrooms already implemented. The next steps to take are to possibly reach out to well

connected organizations looking to inform communities on the subject. This could create a larger

support system within communities to further the understanding of inclusion.

Critical Reflection

Working on this Capstone project, what I learned about myself is how strongly I truly

feel about every child receiving the proper educational experience that they deserve. It is very

important that a child, while developing, receives the support and motivation in and out of the

classroom as they continue to grow. This is especially apparent for children with disabilities,

whether those be mild or severe. Their educational success is important and it is not something

that should be seen as a burden given the extra effort needed to accommodate to their individual

needs. Throughout my years at CSUMB, I have learned numerous teaching methods, those of which helped develop my motive to focus on the topic of Inclusion for this project.

MLO 1 I feel I met when I took LS 394: Multicultural literature for children and young adults. This course changed my entire viewpoint as a future educator. The class, while tying into MLO 2, focused a lot on the diversity of students. Not only was diversity very important to touch base in this course, but really understanding it was such an eye opener. We read books, that had meanings within the text that I had not known prior. The way in which I learned how to read through the help of this course was by far the best learning method I have ever received. Being able to see the double meanings authors use to explain culture was beautiful. This is something I can carry into my future classroom. Giving students a whole new lens that they never even knew existed. Reading will not only be to retain the information but to truly understand the deeper meaning behind words that are much more than what they seem. The clarity I have gained through reading has shaped a completely different outlook for myself, further understanding my culture as well as others', especially when it is put into writing.

MLO 2 was met with LS 362 Immigrants and Equity Issues in Education. This course gave me such an understanding of who people are, how they differ culturally, but not as a people. My professor to the time to give us very in depth lecture, while always concluding class with classroom discussion. This was a very beneficial way to really understand the information being provided, while giving us the time to engage with one another's viewpoints and opinons. I personally am a very visual and hands on learner, therefore the materials provided in this course were very beneficial to how and why the information resonated so well. The use of documentaries was my absolute favorite. They were so informative, while never being boring. It gave a more close to home feeling being able to hear interviews and perspectives of all types of

people with different cultural backgrounds.

My favorite film was an experiment of a group of people, each with diverse cultural backgrounds, all simply talking about their cultural differences. The concept of the film was for everyone to explain how they feel they stand in the eyes of society. Giving their opinions while unleashing the truth amongst each other. The film was a perfect way to show people's true colors while also giving one another a reality check about their own ideals and how certain ways of thinking are not okay. Not only did many of the people in the film have a change of heart, but I myself did also. I am personally aware that being a minority has its downfalls, but hearing it from other people who are like me, explaining the good and the bad, gave me hope. The film reminded me that we as people need to accept our differences, but not let that hinder us, even when others try to do so. As a future educator I will instill this mindset to my students, giving them the proper tools to be culturally aware in this growing diverse society.

MLO 4 was met when I took LS 380 Teaching for Social Change. The goal I had for this course was to rid myself of the educational bias I have had instilled in me from prior learning experiences. This course gave me such a better outlook on what 'social justice' truly means. I was also given the tools to be a better and honest educator. This is something every future educator needs to understand before taking on their own classroom. Educators are the foundation for change, something that is necessary in trying to create a positive environment for students. Taking action is the most important factor, and this course taught me how to initiate the steps in order to do so. An event I went to called "Teachers for Social Justice" gave me an even better understanding of how much of a difference we can make in and out of the classroom. This, with the knowledge I gained from the course has shaped a directional approach I would not be taking, had I not learned the importance of social justice in the classroom.

The next steps I need to take, first and foremost is continuous application of the methods I have learned throughout my educational experience at CSUMB. The Liberal Studies courses mentioned, plus all of the others I have taken, have given me an insight to teaching that I had not known prior. I have so much more respect for teachers than I already had, because I truly understand their role in education is more than just simple lessons. The most important lesson I learned, is that no matter how much I have learned and will continue to learn, I will never be prepared to teach until I actually do it. Service learning was a great way to show me what it is like to be in a classroom and how to work amongst teachers, but to say it prepared me to be an educator, I cannot. The only way I can truly gain experience is when I begin my journey as an educator. This is something I am very happy I learned, releasing myself of false expectations. Therefore, through experience is how I will become the professional that I envision myself to be.

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